

## Fiction: A Mysterious Savior

*"I don't like this place."*

*"Shut the fuck up, Luigi."*

*"I'm just telling you, man, we shouldn't have gone that far. At least wait for back-up."*

*The others sighed. Of course, they all knew he was right. But did they really have the choice?*

*It had been months now. Months since they started tracking down the insane cult that had been rising in the area. These maniacs had been capturing and torturing living beings to fuel their unholy sorcery. They had begun small, with pets and errant cats; but they had soon grown daring and moved to homeless men and women. When they started kidnapping children, the Cell had become more determined than ever to take them down.*

*Eventually, after several weeks of investigation, they had managed to locate their hideout, and led an assault against it. They had been prepared for a fight, but when they arrived, someone had apparently preceded them; all the cultists at the entrance were either dead or unconscious. They had ended up following the trail of bodies to the cave below the building. And this was how they ended up here, in the dark, walking through something wet and they really didn't want to identify.*

*"We still don't know who took down these witches up there," Vera answered. "And we need to see if we can find escapees."*

*"We saw what they do with their prisoners", Luigi protested. "You guys really think they suddenly kept the last ones alive for some reason?"*

*"It's worth checking," Jack answered. "If we could bring back just one kid safe, then our effort won't have been in vain..."*

*"Wait!" Vera suddenly said, causing her comrades to stop with an interrogative look. "I think I saw something move."*

*The three of them raised their flashlight in the direction she pointed at. Eventually, they did reveal someone sitting against the corner. It was a child, a girl who looked barely older than thirteen. Jack noticed with surprise how she seemed in fairly good shape for a prisoner. Not perfect, of course; her clothes were still ripped, her hair wet, and her face marked with bruises. But considering where they had found her, he had expected her to have worse.*

*"See? We told you it'd pay off!" Vera triumphantly told Luigi, before bringing her attention back to the girl. "It's okay, sweetie. We're here to help you."*

*The girl stood up, and Jack couldn't help but be unsettled by how calm she appeared. He had expected to find someone crying, or terrorized. But the way she stared at them... this*

*wasn't the look of a scared kidnapped child. In fact, if she had been taken by them, why was she even free?*

*"You shouldn't be here," she suddenly said.*

*"What?"*

*"You shouldn't be here," she repeated. "It's dangerous. Leave while you still can."*

*Before they could answer anything, she turned her back to them and ran deeper into the cave.*

*"Eh! Wait!" Vera yelled.*

*They rushed after her. However, she ran fast, and they could barely see her in the dark. After a few minutes, they had lost her.*

*"Well, that's just great," Jack groaned. "How are we supposed to save her if she runs away?"*

*"Maybe she is with them," Luigi suggested. "Maybe she's a monster in disguise."*

*"If she is, we will deal with her," Vera answered. "Right now, let's focus on..."*

*A strange noise interrupted her, and the three hunters froze. They had been doing this for a few years now, and experience had taught them to immediately identify the meaning behind a few specific sounds. And in that case, the meaning clearly was "something ugly is lurking in the dark".*

*"Stay together", Vera whispered to them.*

*As she was talking, a snarl was heard, and creatures emerged from the dark. at first, Jack thought they were human, as the shape was roughly the same; but as they got closer, he saw differences; their skin was grey and dirty, their arms disturbingly long with claws and blades on the elbows; their eyes were glowing and hungry; and they opened their mouths, revealing several sharp, broken teeth.*

*The three hunters opened fire. Several of the monsters fell, hit by the bullets as they were rushing at them with beastly shrieks. But they outnumbered them two to one; eventually one of them reached Luigi. The poor man screamed in terror as the thing threw him onto the ground and prepared to sink its teeth into him.*

*That was when, out of nowhere, a ray of light hit the monster in the head. It's horrible, now half-burnt maw let out a disgusting noise before the thing collapsed, allowing Luigi to get up. Monsters and hunters alike stopped their fight and turned around to look where the ray had come from.*

*Then someone stepped out of the darkness.*

*It was a teenage girl again. Not the same, it seemed; she looked slightly older, with a slender body shape, darker skin, and a brighter, slightly long hair, with a red tint to it. Her blue eyes also glowed in the dark. But the strangest part about her was her outfit; she wore something that looked like a strange mix between a pink dress and a golden samurai armor, with a kimono, plate shoulderpads, a form-fitting breastplate and a big bow in the back. And finally, she was wielding a spear-like weapon with a strange, glowing gem in the middle of the blade.*

*Her arrival appeared to enrage the monsters; shrieking, they all rushed toward her with the clear intention of ripping her apart. With an agility that seemed absurd for someone that small wearing armor, the girl stepped aside and stabbed one of them in the flank, killing it instantly. She then immediately removed her weapon from the corpse with surreal ease and used it to block an assault from another of the beasts, before striking back, cutting the creature's head in half. Three of them tried to attack her simultaneously, only to be obliterated by another ray of light she somehow generated from her spear. Another tried to bite her arm, only to be stopped by some strange glowing barrier before she grabbed it, threw it onto the ground and pierced its heart.*

*Then suddenly there was a disgusting tearing sound, and she screamed in pain. The last monster standing had just reached her, and its arm had turned into a blade, catching her by surprise and stabbing through her lower back. The girl spat some blood, then raised her spear at the creature's head. The gem glowed, and a fireball emerged from it, turning the repulsive creature to ashes.*

*Her last opponent gone, the girl almost collapsed, only barely clinging to the closest wall. The three hunters could hear her cough as she started vomiting blood. They couldn't help but stand and look at this strange kid who had just single-handedly slaughtered an entire group of monsters. Eventually, she got up and looked at them.*

*"The children you are looking for are a bit further to the right," she told them. "You should reach them soon. Please make sure they get back home. Don't worry about the other monsters, I took care of them. Good night."*

*She then walked back into the shadow, disappearing in the tunnel. Once she was gone, Jack finally managed to articulate something:*

*"... The fuck was that?!"*



# Introduction: Fire and Light

If there is one thing any Hunter knows, it's that the world is filled with the enemies of humanity. Whether it's monsters crawling in the darkness, sorcerers practicing horrible sacrifices in their basements or spirits haunting abandoned houses and possessing people, the world is filled with dangerous, malevolent beings; all these things are just part of life in the Vigil.

But then, what should Hunters do when they meet supernatural beings who claim to be a force for good?

Sure, creatures who pretend to be good - even genuinely believe that they are so - aren't something unusual. Ghostwalkers and shapeshifters will both occasionally insist that the violence and destruction they cause are actually meant to work toward a greater good. Fae will sometimes put on a nice façade to better attract their unfortunate victims. Beasts try to justify the harm they cause as "lessons" to help humanity improve. But sometimes, Hunters meet supernatural beings who seem entirely genuine in their desire to help humanity. Reports from various Cells tell tales of young women, girls and sometimes even boys in strange, bright-colored outfits showing up out of nowhere to rescue them from swarming monsters, blasting apart the fiends with magic powers and weapons, wandering around haunted and cursed places to banish their evil with ceremonies, or even just helping average people in need while asking nothing in return.

Many might mistake them for witches who just happened to appear benevolent, but in-depth studies reveal other common features -- lack of legal identity, the ability to project a sort of forcefield to protect themselves from harm, magic seemingly fueled by emotions rather than knowledge -- allowing Hunters to classify them as an entirely separate category of supernatural creatures. Nowadays, many terms are used to identify them -- paladins, maidens, guardian angels, child-witches, Sensitives, Lightbearers, empaths, or even Magical Girls -- but they usually refer to themselves either as Princesses, or Nobles.

Sidebar: A brief note about nomenclature.

*"Princess: the Hopeful" usually speaks of the Hopeful as female, mainly because nearly all of our inspirations have girls as their protagonists, and the genre's very name is "magical girl". We would like to emphasize, therefore, that you are not required to play a female PC. By default Blossoming has no connection with gender, and a new Noble is just as likely to be a boy as a girl."*

-Princess: the Hopeful, Vocation version, p. 47

As noted above, Hunters have many different terms they use to refer to Princesses. For the purposes of clarity, this supplement will mostly refer to them as Princesses and Nobles. Just remember not all hunters will refer to them as such.

Both versions of **Princess: the Hopeful** use “Princess” and “Noble” more or less interchangeably. This supplement follows that practice as well.

## Theme One: A Thousand Fractious Points of Light

People who join the Vigil almost always have a reason for doing so. Some honestly want to make a better world. Others seek redemption, profit, or pleasure. But a cause is very easy to lose sight of. They fall into the background, becoming the justification for whatever a person feels they need (or want) to do, no matter how monstrous. People can come to feel small in the shadow of a cause; the more certain about it they are, the more certain they become that they themselves will never bring it about. They grind their lives down until there is nothing left in their life but service to a cause because it's all they have left. When such people speak of their cause, it's nothing but lip service.

Nobles are different. They carry hope in their hearts and their hearts on their sleeves. They are beings of magic charged by their Queens to build a better world, and they are willing to fight their fears and stare down their nightmares to do it. To some, Nobles exemplify light in shadows as well as any Hunter, perhaps even better. Nobles may break, but their causes do not.

To Hunters, this can be an inspiration and a threat. As the Nobles fight for their causes it forces others to re-examine their Vigils, to ask if their own causes are worth fighting for. And most do, renewing their faith in the cause; some because they draw strength from the example the Nobles set, others because they will never cede the rightness of their cause, much less to supernatural beings. When Hunters and Nobles collide, it's not just lives at stake, it's worldviews. If Hunters and Nobles can come together despite their differences, perhaps their shared efforts can truly make a better world. If they can't, the clash of perspectives can lead to wounds deeper than a knife or gun could ever leave.

## Theme Two: The Duality of Light

The theme of **Hunter: the Vigil** is Light in Shadows. This refers to the lights of action and knowledge, of single points seeking their way or multiple lights coming together to form great fires, of the Hunter's knowledge that their Vigil will burn them out in time. But perhaps there is an additional meaning in play. Even though the Hunters see themselves as the light against the shadows, they must keep their Vigil in the shadows. They know if they come into the open they expose themselves to the retribution of monsters and the ostracization of

mundane humanity, and so they keep to their secrecy. As time goes on, many find themselves sacrificing their humanity to keep their sanity and their Hunt going a little longer.

This situation is complicated with the entrance of Nobles. Like Hunters, the lives of Nobles have both human and supernatural aspects. Unlike most Hunters, a Noble tends to see both aspects of their lives as important. Many Nobles see their fight against human evils and human suffering as vital a mission as their war against the Darkness, and will fight on both fronts even to the point of exhaustion.

Thus groups who seek to cooperate or contend with a Noble often find themselves dragged back into the public sphere, either by the Noble themselves or by their own attempts to find opportunity. The conjunction and disjunction between what a Hunter does in private and what they do in public become as drawn into sharp relief as it is for the Noble, and mundane matters take on a new importance they often didn't before. Can a Hunter keep the candle burning at both ends, or will find themselves burnt out all the faster?

## Moods: Fragile Hope and Ready Distrust

Hunters have heard it before. Nobles are by no means the first supernatural beings who have claimed to work for the betterment of the world; some have even spoken of the betterment of mankind. Sometimes alliances form, but all too often it ends in betrayal when the differences can no longer be overlooked or the monsters' instincts and desires can no longer be ignored.

To Hunters, Nobles are no different. They may claim a higher calling, but how can a Hunter trust someone who couples a power they can barely understand with a morality they can't afford to match? Especially one who can hide their human self so deeply and who claims a mandate from otherworldly beings? It becomes so easy for a Hunter to construe a Noble's worldview and actions as monstrous, or at least detached from proper humanity.

Nobles who work with Hunters find themselves grappling with similar questions. They see what mundane humans will resort to doing to fend off the supernatural. They flinch from Hunters who see other supernatural beings as monsters to be slain, unworthy of respect or recognition. It becomes so easy for a Noble to construe a Hunter's worldview and actions as monstrous, or at least detached from proper humanity.

Nobles and Hunters who work together combine their hopes for a better world, a world where lives can come together and respect each other's differences, even those they don't understand. They must defend that hope not just from external dangers but the threat of internal distrust and exploitation. Can Hunters find common ground with these strange supernatural beings? Or will this source of hope be reduced to ashes as too often occurs for those who carry the Vigil?

## How to Use this Book

Each of this chapter covers a different aspect of how Hunters interact with Princesses:

- **Chapter 1: Rebels and Royals** elaborates on how Hunters see the Hopeful, what they know about them, and the reason they would have to fight- or work- with them.
- **Chapter 2: A Kingdom's Laws** provides simplified rules allowing you to include Princesses- or the minions of their enemy, the All-Consuming Darkness - in a *Hunter the Vigil* game.
- **Chapter 3: The Response** describes in detail what the various Compacts and Conspiracies think of the Hopeful. It also introduces three new Compacts and three new Conspiracies who all have their focus on Nobles.
- Finally, **Appendix: Athens of America** explores how hunters have dealt with the arrival of the princesses on their doorsteps in Philadelphia, and their effect on the local struggles between

## Sidebar: Vigil and Hopeful

This fanbook is not meant to be a replacement for either version of **Princess: the Hopeful**, nor do you need them to understand what is in this book.

However, if you have a copy of either the Dream or Vocation version of Hopeful, there's some flexibility in what you can do. You can certainly use the groups described here as antagonists or supporting characters in a Hopeful story; the People's Guard and the Magisters, for example, can make for great villains in a Princess game, while the Light Company and #Ammit can make valuable allies. Alternatively, you can mix and match what you feel fits best in both.

# Chapter 1: Rebels and Royals

## Nobles or Witches?

Overall, Princesses have only recently been identified as something distinct from witches, and plenty of Hunter organizations don't see any difference beyond which tactics they recommend; after all, what else would you call a person who appears human in every way, but has occult powers? Still, over time, several features have allowed Hunters to distinguish them:

First of all, they are frequently very young. The most common age seen is between 15 and 20, but some Hunters have sworn that they've witnessed prepubescent kids too. Warlocks and sorcerers are usually adults, or at the very least young adults, since all the occult knowledge they study to gain their power requires some experience and practice. But Princesses do not seem to have such a limitation, and while they do include some full-grown men and women, a disturbing amount of them are underaged. Even worse, it seems many of

the adult ones actually have had their powers since childhood, and just happened to survive long enough to grow up.using, and while Princesses occasionally do use incantations and rituals -- most commonly when abjuring haunted and cursed places -- usually, their "spells" seem to be activated as instinctively as a werewolf shapeshifting or a vampire using his enhanced strength. With some exceptions, their powers also tend to have a shiny, "holy " feel to them: they can raise luminous shields around themselves, summon weapons that shoot beams of light, or simulate an aura that makes them look like an angel. In addition, they do not seem to have any trouble using their magic in front of regular humans like some mages do, as Division Six painfully found out when they once tried to confront one in San Francisco.

Second, while they are biologically human, their magic appears to be an integral part of their being, rather than something acquired through deals with mystical entities or the study of occult practices. Analysis using technology or supernatural powers reveals that they are partially made up of the magic they are.

Thirdly, they possess a strange ability to "transform", albeit in a different way than shapeshifters (though there have been reports of Nobles with the ability to shift into animals). The strange costumes they wear aren't the uniforms of cults or superhero disguises used by fantasizing children as initially thought: they are a part of their being, which they manifest whenever they are in their supernatural form. The rest of the time, they revert back to a "mundane" state, where they are indistinguishable from human beings even when going through deeper analysis, and don't seem to possess any supernatural abilities (though reports on this part are confused; at least one Hunter insists on having witnessed a Princess who escaped questioning by using some sort of compelling voice while in her "human" form). This transformation is triggered by some kind of trinket they always have on them, which they usually pull out in order to switch to their supernatural form. Attempts to take away or destroy these trinkets have proven unsuccessful; no matter what is done to contain the trinket, it vanishes after some time, and Nobles have been witnessed in possession of trinkets that Hunters acquired for study. Notably the Aegis Kai Doru show no interest in these trinkets, despite the extreme lengths they'll go to acquire most sorts of Relic.

This transformation ability greatly confuses Hunters, especially since, for some strange reason, it seems nearly impossible to connect the two: even if a Princess has exactly the same face in both of her forms, people who have seen her two identities will be unable to recognize her, and still dissociate the two as separate people, unless they actually see the transformation happen or acquire strong evidence to connect the two. Many theories have been developed on this. Some believe Princesses are actually regular people possessed by some strange entity from another realm, and this transformation is just a means for the entity to manifest itself. Some even think the Nobility aren't aware of their double-life, and have a total personality switch when they change forms. So far, however, any attempt to exorcize a Hopeful has proven unsuccessful.



Finally, one last major fact known about Princesses is that their powers are fueled by their faith, idealism and conviction to do good. Anywhere they were found, those among the Hopeful who managed to improve things around them and help people appeared stronger, sometimes capable of taking on entire armed groups on their own; while those forced to witness or commit atrocities and aware of it would struggle to even transform. To add to this, they have some form of hyper-empathy that hunters have identified as their greatest weakness. Princesses who suffer an emotional shock risk losing control over their powers, especially if she was shocked by a deliberate act of cruelty, or a cunning pretense of cruelty. These two things force them to stay as idealistic as possible, and make them reluctant to accept compromises. Some Hunters have seen this as a way to deal with them, believing they are just children who don't want to grow up, and tried to "help" them by pushing them to accept reality. This option quickly proved catastrophic: a Princess who received such a treatment did lose her powers, but this put her in a depression that left her near-catatonic, and seemingly unaware that she had ever used magic. A few hours later, she suddenly turned into a gigantic howling monstrosity and proceeded to rip the building apart, killing dozens of people. This widely spread tale has put an end to most efforts to revert a Princess back to normal. Clearly, even if they really were human to begin with, they are monsters now, and there is no way back. Monsters of hope and light, but monsters regardless.

## Origins of the Light

**Task Force: VALKYRIE**

**File: 319-G3-EJ2**

**Operation Codename: GALE**

**Summary:** *In coordination with in-place DoD assets, task force domestic agents have for the past several months been tracking a threat that is believed to be emerging after a period of either enforced hibernation or coordinated rising (Related file; MARIANAS) in operations against national interests. Information to be expanded in the following report.*

*Initial contact with new confirmed class of P/S-ENE, calling themselves "princesses", "nobles", and various like titles, demonstrated that they have begun cropping up heavily in the San Francisco area since roughly 1982, and have continued to grow in number as time has gone on. Individuals are proactive in activities according to several reports from MRU 10-8 and from Agilaz Group on what was once thought to be an upswing in P/S-ENE activity related to what was presumed to be VOLVA incidents. Further inquiry required several interviews and suborning of local resources to discern the reality of the situation.*

*Aforementioned P/S-ENEs given temporary designation of "Brynhildr"; rough psychological profiling in the field suggests individuals are primarily concerned with what would be*

*considered "traditional" ideals of morality, good and evil, right and wrong. Have been noted as unwilling to resort to extreme measures when faced with adversity, though have also been noted as being skilled in influencing others to do what P/S-ENE desires. Situation compounded by apparent ages of targets; oldest to date encountered claimed to be 19 years old. Claims from subject ENEs suspect and require confirmation from command.*

*Individuals believed to be responsible for hindering task force operations in San Francisco, Glasgow, Milan, and Tokyo. Commonality is their belief that task force personnel are enthralled to a "darkness" and must be willing to work "with the light" to "restore the kingdom". Believed to be barely disguised attempts to coerce task force personnel and seconded personnel to become traitorous and turn allegiances. Claims of a "kingdom" taken to imply massive socio-political upheaval and revelation of highly classified incidents.*

*Further information has revealed rough factional differences between subjects, although the details are being determined in the field. Recommend personnel do all they can, if possible , to secure one subject over the age of 18 alive for questioning.*

*\*Stamp: PRIORITY CODE: RAGNAROK\**

While the Hopeful have only recently been recognized as a specific type of supernatural being, there are some old cases suggesting they have been here for a while. Witches using their power for good, stories about people having a guardian angel, or even strangers who travel from town to town helping people in distress before moving on without asking for anything. Some even believe stories like the tale of Joan of Arc, or myths about the Valkyries, might have referred to Nobles.

There are also stories where hunters confronted what they initially thought to be warlocks, only to find out years later they actually were Nobles all along. Based on the information collected, it seems they are actually quite ancient, but used to be rare; only recently, around the late 90s, did they suddenly start multiplying and spreading around the world for unknown reasons.

Most Princesses who were interrogated on the topic were willing to talk about them, but their answers just raised more questions. Most of them claimed to be reincarnations of ancient magical beings who were trapped for centuries by a terrible evil in a place they call the "Dreamlands". Man walking on the moon, they say, did something to break their prison, allowing them to come back to Earth and be reborn among mortals. They also talked about five immortal "Queens" ruling in these Dreamlands, whose ideals they serve in their quest to bring back light and hope to a broken world.

If anything, these affirmations only serve to raise more suspicions for the Vigil. The idea of ancient immortal Queens from an otherworldly kingdom who send their agents to influence the fate of humanity isn't too dissimilar to some other creatures of the night, like the Fae or the Beasts. Many see the Hopeful as invaders, mysterious dream creatures who take root in our reality by possessing the bodies of young people so they can take over the human nations and prepare them for the coming of their all-powerful monarchs. Sure, they say they are doing this for the good of mankind, but can we really trust them on this? And even if they are genuine, who's to say their definition of good matches our own?

Some evidence supporting this is older intel noting how they used to not be quite as benevolent; many of their earlier appearances are actually quite sinister, describing groups in green and white armor unleashing their magic and wrath on monsters with no concern for the collateral damage in their wake; or strange noblewomen in purple and dark blue veils who came to harvest *something* from countries in the name of some mysterious empress, eventually causing monsters to show up and bring misery. Nobody really knows for sure what caused them to change so much, but while Nobles with this attitude still exist nowadays, the more idealistic ones seem to be growing in number. When interrogated about these darker peers, most of them seem very insistent on dissociating themselves from them, describing these "Twilight Princesses" as dissident factions who forgot what their actual goal was. Not everyone in the Vigil buys this story, but interactions have been witnessed between the so-called "Radiant" with their "Twilight" counterparts suggesting they are indeed hostile to each other.

## Courts

From what Hunters have been able to collect on Noble society, they appear to divide themselves between factions called *Courts*. Each Court owes its allegiance to one of these ageless Queens, and follows her belief and vision of what "good" is. This also gives them a distinct clothing style and unique powers, frequently related to their Queen's philosophy. This variety played a great part in why it took so long for Hunters to realize these weren't just different kinds of witches.

While most courts seem to relatively get along with each other on a whole, there appears to be a clear division between the "Radiant" Courts, whose Queens hail from the mysterious Dreamlands, and the "Twilight" Courts, whose origins are less clear. Overall, Radiant Nobles usually are better-adjusted and more willing to cooperate, while their Twilight Court counterparts have a stronger inclination toward extremism and are frequently more aggressive. However, one should not immediately classify the Radiant as the "good" guys and the Twilight as the "bad" guys -- sometimes things just aren't that simple.

Below are descriptions of the various Courts, and how to depict them as antagonists or supporting characters in a Hunter game. Of course, Hunters won't necessarily know that many details about them, and depending on the context might not even identify them as princesses. For these reasons, potential nicknames cells could use to describe them have been added.

## Radiant Courts:

- **Clubs:** The ones who believe in living in harmony with the world and nature. Pacifists, they dislike starting a fight and prefer to try peaceful options first -- though they can be devastating when you actually get them to fight. Thankfully, this attitude tends to make them somewhat less troublesome. Their powers tend to focus on protection, healing or control over nature and animals. *Nicknames:* Druids, Hippies, Rangers.
- **Diamonds:** The ones who believe in knowledge and study. Frequently the most tech-savvy and intelligent, they try to analyze and study everything, making them always one step ahead of you. They are the most likely to be well-versed in science and occult lore... including, sometimes, darker secrets. Their powers tend to focus on learning, strategy and control over water and ice. *Nicknames:* Spies, Voyeurs, Brains.
- **Hearts:** The ones who believe in tradition, good leadership, and changing the system from the inside. Hunters are particularly wary of these ones, as they try to infiltrate political institutions so they can gain power over them and carry the plans of their Queen. Fortunately, they also tend to be very strict about playing by the rules, making them honorable and unlikely to commit illegal activities. Their powers focus on reinforcing their charisma so they can get people to follow them, as well as control over stone and jewels. *Nicknames:* Monarchs, Knights, Rulers.
- **Spades:** The ones who believe in freedom over all. Cunning and unpredictable, these Nobles can be recognized by their distinct sense of humor and their out-of-the-box thinking. Many of them are rebels, anarchists or former thieves, uncaring about laws and jurisdiction in their quest to improve the world. Their powers focus a lot on speed, trickery and control over air, but they're most infamous among Hunters for their ability to always escape the authorities, effectively making them near-impossible to catch. *Nicknames:* Tricksters, Sylphs, Phantom Thieves.
- **Swords:** The ones who believe in passion and love. Hot-blooded, adventurous and implacable, they stop at nothing to protect their loved ones, and fight fiercely for what they believe in, literally drawing strength from their affection. They are the most likely among Nobles to travel, constantly in search of new adventures, people to meet or places to discover, meaning many of them know people all over the world. Hunters fear them particularly for their ability to overcome almost any obstacle and their dominance over fire. *Nicknames:* Djinns, Adventurers, Drifters.

## Twilight Courts:

- **Tears:** One of the most mysterious Courts, Princesses of Tears are enigmatic Nobles who sometimes appear on Earth to claim areas in the name of their Queen, the “Ever-Flowing One”. They then proceed to harvest some sort of energy from the area, eventually causing creatures of the Darkness to appear and wreak misery. Recognizable by their dark blue or purple clothes and, frequently, their veils, they have power over shadows and ghosts, as well as the ability to drain you of your will. *Nicknames:* Necromancers, Shades, Maidens of Misery.
- **Storms:** Perhaps the most feared of the Hopeful, Princesses of Storms are motivated by nothing but their implacable hatred of the Darkness. Surprisingly more violent than their peers, they seek and destroy Darkness everywhere they can, completely apathetic towards all the collateral damage and innocents who get caught in the crossfire. Strangely, they seem to have a similar animosity toward Princesses of Tears. They are almost always dressed in white and green, and their very destructive powers typically manifest in the form of a green, poisonous fire. *Nicknames:* Furies, Seraphim, Soldiers.
- **Mirrors:** The most disproportionately young among the Hopeful, members of the Court of Mirrors are childish, narcissistic and self-absorbed, utterly convinced they are the only ones who can make things better. Unfortunately, they also happen to have powers oriented toward reinforcing their skills and convincing everyone through seduction that they are right, in addition to possessing control over light and mirrors. Hunters have noted that they are the easiest to find due to rarely assuming their “mundane” identities, but this isn’t that helpful, as they seem to lack the common knowledge that other Courts take for granted. People who live in the same area as a Princess of Mirrors often devolve into a cult of personality, cheering and relying on her for everything. Fortunately, they rarely work in teams, as they seem to hate each other. *Nicknames:* Succubi, Seers, Idols.

## Sidebar: Other Courts

The Radiant and Twilight Courts described above are the best-known Courts, and the ones whose existence has been confirmed by Hunters and Princesses alike, but there is no way to know for sure if they are the only ones. Rumors exist among Cells about other Courts of Nobles with even stranger powers. Some hunters, for example, have talked about Hopeful dressed like desert nomads with an ability to control music and sounds; even crazier stories involve ones who fight half-naked, with the ability to dismantle armors with a single touch and uncover hidden truths. Hunters are far from knowing everything about the world they live in, and Princesses are no exception; you never know what you might discover about them.



## Friend or Foe?

*"It was a nightmare, I'm telling you. Just three days ago, the park was normal. Then the next day, all of a sudden, it started being infected with monsters. Hideous beasts who kidnapped people, vanished out of thin air only to appear somewhere else, ambushing our cellmates. We lost many people before we finally managed to make it to the main building. But once we arrived... there, we saw the cause of all this mess. A group of veiled witches in purple dress were assembled here, doing some crazy ritual. Oh, nothing explicitly horrible- they weren't sacrificing children or anything... but I could just feel something happening while they sang their unholy incantations. They were draining the park of something, and whatever they left missing was causing the monsters to come. We attacked, but they just raised some strange shield to protect themselves from the bullets. One of them spoke in a weird language I didn't know, and they suddenly all turned into shadows before disappearing. It took us years to purge the park from the monsters, and even today it still hasn't fully recovered from the damages. And this, my friends, is why I don't trust the Empaths."*

**- Trevor Miller, Union hunter**

Unlike many other supernatural creatures, Princesses do not appear to have anything blatantly evil in their nature. They don't suffer a hunger to kill or hurt people, they aren't prone to outbursts of devastating rage (at least not more than humans), and the services they offer do not come at any known sinister cost. They genuinely seem dedicated to helping mankind, and in fact this appears to be a vital part of their nature: their magic grows stronger when they successfully accomplish something good, and is disturbed when they witness atrocities. They also tend to be less enigmatic, and most of them will eagerly work together with hunters towards a common cause if the opportunity presents itself. Judging by all of this, you would think them nothing but valuable allies to the Vigil, in a world where practically everything supernatural is an enemy. And sometimes, they are.

Unfortunately, things aren't always quite that simple. The Nobles might mean well, but the reality is, their own definition of good doesn't necessarily sit well with the Hunters' vision. Some are willing to make compromises when needed, but many Compacts and Conspiracies employ methods they just cannot accept. Moreover, when humans fight primarily to protect mankind and their loved ones, Nobles fight to do *good*, and humans are just as capable of doing bad things as any supernatural being, making them potential targets of their ire. Princesses might, for example, play vigilante, wandering the streets at night to beat up completely human criminals, or employ their magic to ruin the business of a corrupt corporation. These might seem like good things to do on paper, but from a hunter's point of view, it frequently looks like just another case of a supernatural being lording their unnatural power over a human. Or, other times, the Princess' actions might unintentionally harm employees just doing their job. There have also been cases where they attacked seemingly innocent humans, insisting these people were somehow "tainted" or "Darkened".

At the end of the day, the Hopeful are idealists who care about doing the right thing before any form of allegiance, and that makes them a wild card; one Noble will help the local Union cell exorcise the nearby abandoned warehouse from its bloodthirsty ghost, another will attack a Malleus Maleficarum torture hideout and release all their prisoners. Concepts such as “necessary evil” or “dirty work for the greater good” are as likely to attract a Princess’ ire as her sympathy; acts of cruelty on others literally hurt them, and many Princesses just barely tolerate them, be it from hunters or creatures of the night.

Not only that, but they will sometimes also try to help monsters as much as humans, in the hope the two can live together peacefully; several cells, in particular, ran into Princesses actively supporting vampires, using their magic to help them feed without hurting people while defending them against aggressive humans. An admittedly admirable endeavor, but frequently judged risky and naive from a hunter’s usually pragmatic point of view.

Then, there is the mere issue that, even if they mean well, Princesses are still part of the supernatural, a force any hunter worth his name has learned not to trust. One of the first things you learn when working in the Vigil is that, when it comes to monsters, things aren’t always what they seem, and not everyone is convinced these so-called Nobles actually are a force for good. Sure, their *powers* seem like they come from something holy -- but who’s to say they aren’t thieves, stealing the light of heaven for their own ends?

And finally, you have the ones who fall. Princesses, as idealistic and as pure as they might seem, aren’t impervious to what the dark, cruel truth of the world can do to your mind. Their belief can be broken, and when this does happen, they tend to fall hard. At best, they stick to their fight, but become zealots who hunt “evil” without any care for the collateral damage, or self-righteous vigilantes who desperately stick to their utopian convictions no matter how inappropriate it is. At worst, they succumb to despair and let the monster inside them take over, turning them into mindless abominations on par with the nightmares they fight. Many feel all of them are doomed to fall in either of these categories eventually; the world isn’t a place for angels, and you cannot hope to stay one in it. To these people, the Hopeful are just time bombs waiting to happen, and should be taken care of while they are still ticking.

## Fighting a Noble

*You know, many people I met thought these so-called “Nobles” were a joke. I get it, I really do. In fact, I used to think like this. After all, when you have faced blood-sucking corpses, men who turn into cannibalistic wolf-men, or walking nightmares disguised as people, how are you supposed to take sparkly little girls in superhero suits seriously? That just doesn’t sound as scary...*

*But then I actually met one of them.*

*It all started like any other day, as we were interrogating some guy about one of his friends we suspected of being a vampire. Our leader was in a bad mood, and getting paranoid, so he started beating him up.*

*And then, she showed up. She looked young, barely more than seventeen. She was wearing a flashy red and pink dress with laces, and her hair was dyed to look like flames. At first, the others thought she was just some kid who got lost, and tried to make her leave nicely. They completely changed their attitude when she raised her hand, and a longsword appeared out of nowhere between her fingers.*

*The guys panicked, and started to shoot. She started moving so fast we could barely see her, dodging the bullets without breaking a sweat. When a few lucky shots actually got her, she deflected them with some sort of shiny barrier. Then she lit that friggin' sword on fire and started slashing through us. None of us died, somehow, but it barely took her more than a few seconds to make all of us bite the dust. Twelve trained men with guns and kevlar vests, taken down by a teenage girl in a mini-dress with an oversized knife.*

*When we woke up, we found our leader beaten to a pulp with severe burns, and the prisoner was gone. All she left behind was a message, written on the wall of our safehouse with the edge of her blade: "Stay away from my friends". We went to check on everyone in the guy's inner circle, his girlfriend, his sister, anyone in the neighborhood, but we couldn't find who she was.*

*That was how I learnt to not underestimate Nobles. They might look all rainbows and sunshine, but that Light they keep rambling about? Yeah, it really gives them power. And when you give them reason to unleash that power on you, they are fuckin' terrifying.*

**-Samuel Stone, veteran Hunter.**

Nobles definitely stand out compared to other supernatural beings. With their flashy magic, bright costumes and strong tendency to be kids or teenagers, they in fact look almost like something out of superhero comics rather than dangerous creatures of the night. Because of this, many hunters treat them lightly, seeing them as little more than idealist children who barely understand what is going on. This attitude typically proves to be a mistake.

Despite their idealism, the Hopeful are in no way weak, and can prove just as much of a threat as any vampire or werewolf. They can raise magic fields allowing them to shrug off bullets with only a few bruises. Their silly-looking costumes can actually turn out to be near-impenetrable armors, and they can summon magic weapons of impressive might out of thin air. Some of them can dodge attacks at incredible speed, and knock out in one punch a man twice their size. Others yet have familiars who look like harmless plushies, but can suddenly transform into dangerous mythical beasts. Hunters who make the mistake of underestimating Nobles because of their cheesy superhero look and idealism might suffer the humiliating experience of being easily defeated by a small girl dressed like an anime cosplayer. They might not look as threatening or scary as a savage beast man or a creepy knife-wielding doll, but they are still supernatural creatures, and their powers are very real.

Another problem with fighting Nobles is that their appearance and nature makes it really uncomfortable for hunters to kill them. Slaying a witch, who is identical to a human aside from some weird powers and will become a human corpse upon death, is one thing; slaying someone just like this, only if they happen to look like a little girl and genuinely believe they are doing the right thing, is another entirely. Any hunter with some amount of humanity left is horrified by the prospect of killing children, and even when they aren't, to everyone else they will look like child murderers.

And of course, there is the issue of a Princess' dual identity. Unless you actually witness her transforming with your own eyes, it is nearly impossible to make the connection between a Hopeful's "normal" and supernatural forms, and their normal one is human enough that there is currently no way to identify them by any scientific or supernatural means. Would-be Noble hunters must be careful to never let their target get out of sight, or she will turn back to mundane form while they aren't looking and disappear in the crowd of mortals, ruining all chances of finding her. In fact, a strangely high number of pursuits end with the target escaping after getting directions from a nearby pedestrian after rounding a corner and finding the Noble had suddenly vanished.

For all these reasons, hunters who confront the Hopeful usually learn pretty fast to not underestimate how tricky fighting such beings can be. Many actually prefer to use diplomacy whenever possible, both for moral and pragmatic reasons, but when a fight becomes unavoidable, they make sure to prepare for a devastating confrontation.

### Sidebar: Attack them while they Transform?

Magical Girl stories (which many Hunters believe might have been inspired by the Hopeful) have a reputation of using elaborate, overly long transformation sequences, which should give plenty of time for the villains to attack them. While Hunters are too pragmatic to ignore a weakness like this, they have been disappointed to discover this doesn't apply to the Nobility, whose Transformation requires mere seconds. Unless a Hunter is already aiming at her before she can switch forms, a Princess will be ready to fight as quickly as a Hunter can swing his weapon to the flash. And if a Hunter is completely sure about which seemingly normal girl he needs to aim his weapon at, he'd be better off taking her out before she starts to Transform...

*"What? You think this assignment is going to be easy, greenhorn? I've fought these witches before, and let me tell you who else wore a stupid outfit. Superman, with his underwear outside his tights. This is not a cakewalk, and if you don't shape up you won't be coming home. I've seen skilled veterans empty entire clips and hit nothing but air. I've seen little girls walk off bullets at point blank range. And rookie, you will never ever laugh at a Barbie magic*

*wand that shoots rainbows once you've seen those rainbows melt the flesh off a man's bones. Oh god, I can still smell it."*

**-Charles Nelson, Task Force VALKYRIE captain**

## Sworn

While Princesses themselves clearly are supernatural beings, and their powers are part of them, it still appears they are capable of sharing it. Much like vampires occasionally grant a portion of their power to humans by infecting them with a small amount of their blood, the Hopeful can use a ritual to impregnate a mortal with part of their light. The mortal then becomes what they call a "Sworn", gifted with a weaker version of their abilities, as well as magic weapons and other items, in order to fight by their side.

These Sworn are a major problem for many members of the Vigil. It's bad enough that Princesses throw themselves in a war against everything they see as evil, but they can also grant powers to average joes and drag them in their little crusade. Fortunately, they cannot seem to recruit Sworn without consent, though many Nobles are charismatic, and can convince anyone to willingly join their cause with the right words. Moreover, unlike vampires, it seems like only some of the strongest Princesses have access to this ritual.

That said, for all the problems hunters have with this practice, it can also prove a valuable asset when forming alliances with Nobles; the average hunter is in constant disadvantage against the supernatural, and not all of them can afford the Endowments provided by Conspiracies; being granted some amount of power, however small, can sometimes even the odds. The Hopeful, for their parts, usually are more than happy to give already experienced humans the proper weapons to fight the Darkness, and frequently seek out Hunter Cells as candidates for new Sworn - something they actually accept quite often. At least one Compact, the Light Company, maintains good relationships with Princesses and has a good chunk of their recruits turned into Sworn on a regular basis. Some of their peers frown upon this practice, seeing this as collaboration with the supernatural, but they don't care; as far as they are concerned, the more people this allows them to save, the better.

## Berserker Cells

While Sworn can be a problem, they usually aren't that numerous: as noted above, only the strongest Nobles have the ability to share their power, and they tend to be very careful when choosing their allies in the first place. A Radiant Princess rarely has more than one or two of them, usually close friends or relatives she seeks to protect from her enemies. The Necromancers tend to have a lot more, and in fact frequently have their Nobles outnumbered by them, but even they usually just use them as foot soldiers or bodyguards. And a Sworn is mostly dependent on his Princess to maintain his power, limiting their autonomy.



There is however, one exception regarding the ones from the Court of Storms. For some strange reasons, the Furies seem to have much less restriction when it comes to their Sworn: not only do they exist in much bigger numbers, but they also appear to be more autonomous, and can operate separately from Princesses. Some say they don't even need to receive their powers from the Hopeful, instead being granted them by the Queen herself, though most hunters pray this is an exaggeration. But perhaps the worst part is, they are organized; many of them assemble in cells like hunters to fight against the Darkness.

Unfortunately these "Berserker" cells, as they are commonly called in the Vigil, happen to follow the most violent and ruthless of the Queens, and this is reflected in their attitude: like the Princesses they share Court with, they want to see the Darkness *burn*, and they don't care if they have to destroy entire streets or kill innocent people to succeed. They are frequently mistaken for a variety of slashers, and in fact, much like slashers, a large part of them start out as hunters. Meaning not only do people in the Vigil have to worry about cells of maniacs shooting at random people in the hope of taking down monsters, but also about the possibility of berserkers infiltrating their own cells.

#### Sidebar: Stormwracked as Berserker Cells

Anyone familiar with **Princess: the Hopeful** probably recognized the Berserker Cells as the Stormwracked, a faction of Sworn serving the Queen of Storms in this book. This faction was always designed with the idea they were hunters in mind, with the book merely avoiding actual hunter mechanics and names because the book was supposed to be about the Princesses. This supplement, on the other hand, is about hunters, meaning you have the opportunity to play them as members of the Vigil- albeit most likely as antagonists, due to their fanatic tendencies.

In terms of game system, treat Berserker Cells (or Stormwracked, depending on how you intend to call them) as Tier 2 Hunters with a Compact; they have access to all the mechanics traditionally associated with hunters, such as risking Willpower and Tactics. Their Compact Status counts as a Mystery Cult Initiation merit, whose first dot grants the Sworn Merit at a rating equal to his Compact Status, along with the Queen of Storms' Ideal. Customize the other benefits offered by the Status as you wish; Berserker Cells are not unified, and each Cell provides different benefits to its members.

## Becoming a Noble

Anyone who stays long enough in the Vigil ends up learning that the Supernatural tends to be contagious; vampires, werewolves, mages and plenty of other creatures have the ability, willingly or not, to turn mundane humans into more of them. Which raises the obvious question: does this apply to the Hopeful? Is it possible for a mortal to turn into a Noble?

For the most part, the answer seems to be yes; Princesses who were interrogated about it did mention having a normal life once before waking up one day with magic powers, and reports have been made of previously ordinary people who suddenly turned. The reason behind such transformations, however, is mostly unknown; they obviously don't turn people via bite, nor can their abilities be taught to someone, and no clear pattern has been discerned to give any form of explanation. All most hunters have is theories, blind guessing, and speculations; it once was a popular theory that only Sworn could become Nobles, with their status being an intermediary state, but this has since been discarded. Other suggested explanations include entities from the Dreamlands young girls, or Nobles being named by Queens, the same way a Princess can make a human into a Sworn.

Whatever the cause of such transformations is, hunters don't appear to be immune to it; there have been instances of cells whose members turned into Nobles, though they are for the most part rare and difficult to locate, since most subjects prefer to hide such information from their cellmates. The attitudes vary considerably on the topic depending on the Cells, Compacts and Conspiracies; the Light Company consider it a blessing, while anyone caught being a Noble in the People's Guard will immediately be declared a traitor, possibly executed on the spot.

## The Outer Darkness

*The phenomenon known as "the Darkness" is a particularly nasty one worthy of its name. Those unfortunate enough to be affected experience mutagenic symptoms and more worryingly, there is a noticeable effect upon the subjects' brain, reducing empathy and increasing sociopathic tendencies. My team investigated several sites reported to be vectors of infection and we noticed that all of the sites were dark and damp compared to the surrounding environs. Unsurprisingly, we found an abundance of mold and spores, most of which exhibited mutations similar to infected humans. Now it is possible that even molds are affected by the same process, but Occam's Razor suggests that this mold is the source of the symptoms.*

*Of course this raises further questions. Where does the mold come from? Folk tales say "the Darkness" appears at the sites of atrocities, but it would be obviously unethical to commit an atrocity to test that possibility. I believe that this mold causes people to behave in atrocious ways before the more visible symptoms occur, leading to its association with evil itself; but unless we are lucky enough to stumble upon a mold colony before anyone is infected, I cannot see any practical experiments in our labs' future.*

**-Dr. William Cole, Member of Null Mysteriis**

The emergence of Nobles in large numbers is a relatively new occurrence, but the monsters they fight are better known to the Hunters. Some places around them are haunted, not by ghosts or spirits, but by... *something* else. It's like these areas have a curse reinforcing the evil inside them, urging their visitors to act on their darkest impulses and punishing them

when they try to do good. Usually, this influence is subtle, nothing blatant -- you just feel like something is wrong, without actually witnessing any obvious supernatural phenomenon. But when you leave such places abandoned for too long, this influence takes root, and its effects become obvious: they become hideouts for cults trying to summon dark powers, or nests for hideous monsters who feed on people's misery and despair. People who stay too long in these places start to suffer unholy mutations, eventually dying to resurrect as more of these abominations.

Nobody is really sure of the connection between the Hopeful and these things, but some hunters believe they are actually responsible for creating them. In the past, the appearance of the harvesting veiled princesses would frequently cause the birth of such places. However, the ones who were questioned about it vehemently denied this theory, insisting they are, in fact, trying to destroy such places. They indeed seem quite dedicated to eradicate "The Darkness", as they call this phenomenon, actively seeking out these areas to purge them and mercilessly slaughtering the monsters growing inside them. They are sometimes willing to give other supernatural creatures the benefit of the doubt, but when it comes to these "Darkspawn", they seem to have no problem exterminating them.

## Uneasy Co-operation

*"What the hell are you talking about?"*

*Nathan reloaded his shotgun while talking. Camille was sitting in a corner, attending to her own wounds. She could barely look him in the face. The monster had left some nasty scars on her leg, but she seemed like she would still be able to walk as long as the injury didn't get infected. Unfortunately, the same could not be said about Nathan's right eye; the creature's claw had managed to reach the hunter's face, digging through his orbit. He would survive, but unless they could find some sort of magic cure, he would never see from this eye ever again.*

*"I am saying I am sorry," she repeated, still avoiding his face. "It's my fault you got dragged into this."*

*"Cut that crap. I would probably be dead if not for you."*

*"But I could have left it at that!" she protested. "I could have just walked away instead of getting you involved, and you..."*

*"I would have probably gone to fight these things anyway," he cut in. "Except even less prepared and not knowing what I was about to face. Pretty sure I am better off this way." The girl lowered her head.*

*"I just never wanted these creatures to attack your family. Or to hurt you. Or..."*

*"Camille."*

*Approaching her, Nathan carefully raised her face to make her look him in the eye.*

*"It's alright. I know your empathy thing is hitting again, but trust me: I regret nothing."*

*He then stood up and cocked his shotgun.*

*"Now get your shit together and make some magic so we can at least get out of this alive."*

*The girl hesitated for a few seconds, then, with a little smile, nodded. Standing up, she grabbed her wristband and made a small gesture. In a flash of light, she found herself in blue-and-silver armor with a wand in her hand. Satisfied, Nathan focused, and his shotgun transformed as well, turning into some strange, elongated weapon.*  
*"That's more like it," he said. "Now, let us show that thing what we can really do..."*

Regardless of how much truth there is to what the Hopeful claim, there is no denying that these creatures of darkness are indeed malevolent. They make little attempt to hide it, and in fact, the ones who aren't mindless monsters usually seem to revel in their depravity. No one in his right mind would try to defend them, and everybody in the Vigil agrees that they should be destroyed without a second thought whenever met. Unfortunately, this is no easy task. The Darkness festers anywhere something violent or horrible happens, and spending your life hunting creatures of the night makes you very likely to find yourself in places like this. Its influence is a nightmare to deal with: hunters with honest-to-God good intentions, who are here to protect their families and friends, will feel the entire area eroding their skills and trying everything to make them fail; the ones with selfish intentions or cruel methods will expose themselves to the taint, and risk joining the ranks of the enemy. No matter who they are, visiting these areas represents a risk.

This usually is when Princesses come in. Unlike Hunters, the Hopeful seem immune to the Darkness' corruption. They sure don't feel comfortable in its presence, but it cannot corrupt and warp them like it does with humans. They also display a lot more experience when fighting it. They know its strengths, its weaknesses, how to purify the areas touched by its influence, and how to treat it before it grows out of control. And perhaps more importantly, they are as dedicated to ending it as hunters are. On the other hand, they are still vastly overpowered by it despite their growing numbers; for every Noble active in a town, there are frequently at least ten places tainted by the Darkness. Princesses might have magic powers, but they typically lack the manpower and resources to accomplish their tasks. Both things Compacts and Conspiracies are capable of offering them.

As a result, though neither of the two would like to admit it, the Vigil and the Hopeful tend to somewhat depend on each other whenever the Darkness is involved. Whether they like it or not, they have to collaborate on this, because Nobles need allies (or pawns, depending on your point of view), and Hunters need to know what they are dealing with. Whenever they can find each other, the two will try to get in touch, form an agreement and join forces to locate and take care of all the tainted areas in the sector. How such alliances turn out depend entirely on the region and cells. Some are actually eager to have supernatural creatures fight on their side, and put genuine effort in making this work. Others still distrust the "witches", and only accept their assistance reluctantly. Others just flat-out refuse, not wanting to involve themselves with the supernatural.

Fortunately, with or without the Hopeful's help, the Darkness does have one weakness Hunters have learnt to exploit. Much like vampires fear sunlight and werewolves silver, creatures of Darkness have proven vulnerable to jade, which can be used both to harm them as weapons and to protect yourself from their powers. This discovery hasn't fallen on deaf ears, and to date, whenever hunters go to hunt creatures of the Darkness, veterans usually advise them to carry bits of jade with them.





## Spawns of the Darkness

*“Darkness is a pretty tame term to describe what it really is. It’s a virus, a sickness. It festers in places you left to abandon and stopped cleaning. Then, when you get exposed to it, it looks for signs of weakness, openings that can be used to bypass your defenses. When it does find one, it infects your soul, and starts spreading inside it like a plague would inside your body. It warps you until you are nothing but a grotesque parody of yourself. And then, once its job is done, it tries to get out so it can go do the same to other people. You are not just fighting monsters when you fight the Darkness; you are fighting an epidemic.”*

**- Tabitha Parker, member of the Ascending Ones**

Compared to Nobles, Creatures of Darkness are much harder to classify. These monsters exist in a large variety, some of them even being unique, and don't appear to have clear-cut factions; they seem more like many different monsters and cults who just happen to get their powers from a common source. Still, there are some categories of creatures, of “Spawn” as hunters call them, that are commonly recognized in the Vigil:

- **Lurkers:** Horribly twisted and loathsome creatures that seem to almost feed on the suffering they cause to humanity. While most instances report that they are entirely bestial, some appear to possess a dangerous cunning when it comes to spreading misery and chaos. These are the most common kinds of Spawn, and while monstrous, they are also the easiest to eliminate: most can be taken down with enough firepower, and jade tends to harm them even more than other Spawns. Sadly though, these creatures are just the symptom of a much greater problem that Hunters are faced with, something very few Hunters are aware of, and thus miss critical opportunities to eliminate the problem wholesale.
- **Infiltrators:** A far more advanced and dangerous Spawn than a Lurker. Infiltrators are dangerous because they're completely indistinguishable from an ordinary human. They still appear to feed off misery and chaos, but they possess enough intelligence (although many argue whether or not they are sentient or just cunning enough to fake it) to be subtle in their predation and careful enough to avoid outright detection like their Lurker cousins. In fact, some Compacts and Conspiracies theorize Infiltrators to have once been humans themselves before being infected and transformed into something...else. Whatever the case, they are definitely not human anymore (if they ever were), and often naive Hunters underestimate their danger and powers compared to their Lurker cousins. Those who do usually don't survive the confrontation.

- **Nests:** Often confused for haunted locations or the equally rare Institutional Demon, Nests are the true threat that all Hunters must inevitably face when Spawn are involved. They are physical locations where tragedy or atrocities took place that seem to take on a life of their own, actively gestating and birthing Spawns into the world to act as worker drones to collect the misery and suffering it needs in order to grow and expand. Unlike spirit haunted locations or Institutional Demons, Nests are definitely not sentient, and act with an almost animalistic instinct when spreading and creating Spawns. If Lurkers or Infiltrators are present, then without question a Nest is nearby, and must be taken care of if the Spawn problem is to ever be completely solved. Luckily for Hunters and Mortal Mediums, Nests seem to be affected by exorcisms and other purification rituals. Unfortunately, humans who enter a Nest are beset by traumatic flashbacks and mental assaults by the Nest itself, as well as having to confront any Spawn that are at the Nest or rush back to defend it. The most curious part about Nests, though, is that they are exceedingly rare, and seem to generally appear (or are "birthed") when the supernatural creatures known as Nobles are within the general region. Many Hunters debate to this day whether or not Nobles are just numerous where there are Nests because they are creatures who universally oppose the Spawn, or if the Nest and Spawn themselves are drawn to areas with high Noble activity and seed themselves nearby in order to feed off the misery they bring to the Empaths themselves.

That being said, many Cells, Compacts, and Conspiracies don't even acknowledge the existence of Spawns, and simply see other supernatural monsters that just share similar characteristics. Truly, how many monsters exist in the world who were once human but are now beasts that feed upon their former friends and family? How many "cursed" locations reach out and twist a population against itself? And why should thousands of years of history and research be put aside for some fable that Nobles tell amongst themselves to easily explain why they are good and every other creature of the night is evil? These are questions all Hunters must face sooner or later.

#### Sidebar: Irredeemable? The Darkness and Morality

*"By my Queen, I can't recall the last time I was in a fight like that! No moral ambiguity, no hopeless battle against ancient and overwhelming forces! They were the bad guys, we were the good guys, and they made a very satisfying sizzle when they felt my light."*

-Princess: the Hopeful, Dream 241, Vocation 231.

*"Still another group may believe that not all monsters are irredeemable, and are determined to try to negotiate a peaceful outcome instead of going in with guns blazing."*

-Hunter: the Vigil, Corebook 17

The official position of *Princess: the Hopeful* is that Darkspawn, Mnemosyne, and Cataphractoi are incurable monsters, and the only sane solution is to put them down.

Out-of-universe, Darkspawn, Mnemosyne, and Cataphractoi exist so that the Storyteller and Player Characters can have disposable mooks and powerful enemies that can be dispatched with plenty of magic and no moral compunction, a tradition of media featuring magical warriors. The Belief system in both versions heavily favor attacking and destroying creatures of Darkness to any other options. In-universe, all three are born of a human's death; the human they once were is gone, leaving only a monster that is pure evil. They are part of the Darkness, and thus a threat to the world whose only solution is to wipe them out. This is something almost all Nobles come to know sooner or later.

But what happens when Hunters become involved?

You would think that the need for creatures of Darkness to be destroyed would be the one thing on which all Hunters could come together. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. For one thing, many Hunters take issue with the concept of an evil as pure and irredeemable as the Darkness, seeing such views as antiquated or inaccurate. A Hunter who sees a Noble taking down monsters who look or were human without remorse or regret is likely to see the Noble as murderous and uncaring. At the least, it's likely to harden suspicions that the Noble is a dangerous supernatural being who can't be trusted. A Noble who tries to explain the nature of the Darkness is likely to be met with skepticism and possibly revulsion. This goes double when the innate connection of the Darkness to human sins is discussed, which may come off to Hunters as accusatory and self-righteous. It's not fair (and often hypocritical), but few Hunters have ever been fair towards the supernatural. .

(At this point it should be noted that analogues to the Darkness - creatures designed to be destroyed without moral compunction - do exist in other gamelines. The questions raised here are more likely to apply to the Darkness because of how central it is to the setting of **Princess: the Hopeful** and because creatures of Darkness are born of humankind.)

And just because a Noble knows that a creature of Darkness cannot be saved doesn't mean others believe it. Those who see a creature of Darkness and can recognize a human they once knew may find it harder than they expected to do what needs to be done; and may try to convince themselves that the person they have lost can somehow be brought back. Even Mnemosyne and Cataphractoi may have friends and family advocating for mercy or at least people who are convinced that this is a high-functioning sociopath who should be worked around instead of "murdered".

This is to say nothing about potential conflicts where Darkened – Darkness-infected humans who *can* be cured - are involved. *Princess: the Hopeful* already involves such conflicts between Furies and other Nobles, and the possibility of extending these conflicts to other creatures of Darkness and other Hunters may be one a Storyteller may wish to explore in their chronicle. It should be noted that Hunters unable to tell the difference between Darkened and Human-looking creatures of Darkness may see the Nobles as capricious and arbitrary, trying to cure one while dispassionately destroying the other, and again are unlikely to trust the Noble's word on such things.

Each individual who carries the Vigil will have their own views of what the Darkness is; said views can be seen in the respective sections of the compacts and conspiracies. Swayed by

their own worldviews and ignoring the experience and knowledge of the Nobles themselves, Hunters may come to disbelieve the Nobles' warnings. They may convince themselves that creatures of Darkness can be handled without having to kill them, that they can be studied, controlled, or even cured. As no such thing is actually possible, such actions are in the end expressions of carelessness, hubris or misguided intentions and can only lead to tragedy.

But what if it doesn't?

A Storyteller concerned about the existence of monsters that can be blamelessly killed or one simply curious about the possibilities may ask themselves – What if the Nobles are wrong? What if there is still a human soul behind the eyes of a Cataphract, trapped in despair but still capable of being saved? What if the Darkness is an infection, medical, psychic, or spiritual that can be cured? Hunter groups may claim such a thing is possible and act accordingly; what if they're right?

If creatures of Darkness can be cured, it will likely have massive repercussions in the Chronicle. Those fighting them will have to weigh the threat they pose right now against the chance that they may be cured. Nobles will have to face the new enormity of everything they've done up to this point. Their relationships to whoever found such a method would radically shift. And fighting Creatures of Darkness will cease to be the morally blameless option for Nobles.

For this reason alone, a Storyteller should discuss such possibilities with their table beforehand. Storytellers should also be prepared to consider how curable creatures of Darkness will affect the systems of Belief and Integrity, and discuss such potential changes with their table. In the end, a group may want monsters they can just kill for the sake of all that is Good, and that's okay as long as there is consensus and understanding.

Keep in mind that even if the answer in your Chronicle is, "These monsters can't be cured, only killed, and there's nothing wrong with doing so," that such an answer isn't the end of things. What does such a truth do to the line between human and monster that so many Hunters want to believe is clear? What does it mean to the Hunter (or even the Noble) who wants to believe that all humans are redeemable, or that anthropomorphic evil is a concept with no place in how the world works? What does it do to the psyche of a Hunter, one who already struggles with fighting monsters without becoming one themselves, to tell them that there are monsters that exist and can be killed without remorse or regret?

In the World of Darkness, even the easy answers are anything but.

## Two Sides of the Same Coin?

*It's been known that the ones who call themselves Nobles and the creatures they refer to as the Darkness are often found in close proximity to each other. We're aware that correlation is not causation, but rumors claim that Nobles can actually undergo catastrophic mutations and become said monstrous creatures. If true, this would be a cause of great concern, and it has*

*already fueled much speculation and hypothesizing. The other day, a colleague floated a troubling hypothesis regarding the connection between the Darkness infection and these "Princesses" - the latter are carriers. She hypothesized that they possessed some biological (or technological?) method of suppressing the infection, spreading it to others while remaining asymptomatic themselves until it became unmanageable, resulting in rapid symptoms and a greatly magnified onset of the infection. There are still too many variables left unknown to be certain, but the thought of these individuals, frequently only mere teenagers, acting as "Typhoid Marys" to the very people they claim to protect is... unnerving.*

**-Dr. William Cole, Null Mysteriis**

Hunters who acknowledge the existence of both the Darkness and the Hopeful rarely take long to realize the two appear to be connected in some way, despite practically being antithetic to each other. As noted above, Nests are rarely far from wherever Nobles are, and vice-versa. Nobles relentlessly hunt beings of the Darkness, and Lurkers usually target them first. And of course, nobody can forget the Shades, who cause Nests and Lurkers to appear wherever they practice their sinister rituals.

Which always leads to the inevitable question: are Nobles the cause of the Darkness?

There are arguments for both sides of the debate, but many fear it might be the case. Even Nobles rarely give very clear answers on the topic: typically, they deny being responsible for its existence, but do recognize they are responsible for how powerful it is nowadays. The infamous incident revealing what happened to the ones who broke also caused many to believe they weren't that different from the things they fought.

Still, there isn't enough proof to be sure this theory is true, and many are willing to oppose it; The Nobles have been working hard to protect mortals for decades now, and many areas are genuinely safer because of them. Plenty of people owe them their lives, including among the Vigil, and have a really hard time believing they're the cause of the danger. After all, if that was indeed the case, then surely they wouldn't be able to make things better, right?

Regardless of the truth, Nobles and Spawns are very likely linked to each other. Hunters just have yet to figure out what this link is.

## Chapter 2: A Kingdom's Laws

The following section provides rules to build and use the Hopeful and Creatures of the Darkness as antagonists or supporting characters in your **Hunter: the Vigil** Chronicles. These rules are not meant to replace the ones from **Princess: the Hopeful**; if you have either version of this book, go for it and use the mechanics from there. The mechanics depicted here are meant for players who do not have or do not wish to use it, and want to

stay focused on Hunters while still involving Nobles and creatures of the Darkness in their Chronicle.

## Sidebar: One Candle Lights Another

This supplement was started before Hunter: the Vigil's 2E rules began to be released. As those rules develop, the rules here will adapt as necessary. The adaptations here are suggestions; feel free to ignore, comment on, or add suggestions of your own.

## Endowments

The Endowments currently in this supplement will remain as they are pending further development and release of the H:tV 2E Endowment rules. As Endowments are added or refined, the format they will take will be decided on a case-by-case basis for the time being.

## The Code

The H:tV 2E playlist rules have a set of Breaking Points that is nearly universal to all hunters. Some are Innate, carried over from the Hunter's life before the Vigil. Others are tied to the Code itself, the "set of tenets every hunter instinctively recognizes as sacred duties of the Vigil." A Hunter who is in a Compact or Conspiracy is allowed to trade out one Code tenet for a Low-Integrity Code tenet relating to said group, but such modifications give a penalty to Social rolls with Hunters outside the group who know that the Hunter has changed his Code.

The Code as it currently stands is believed by some to be unfriendly to compacts and conspiracies whose objectives involve assisting the supernatural or even simply interacting with it in not immediately violent ways, which is problematic for many groups presented in this supplement, in particular the Magisters and the Light Company. The following suggestions allow more flexibility for such groups, and hopefully more flexibility in general. Again, feel free to ignore, comment on, or add to these suggestions:

- The penalty for Social rolls with Hunters outside the group does not apply until the discrepancy in beliefs is discovered; in mechanical terms, until the Hunter avoids a Code-based breaking point because they swap it out or have swapped it out with a group-centered Code tenet. Per Storyteller discretion, members of the same Compact or Conspiracy who have altered their Code in different ways do not face penalties in Social rolls with each other, so long as the alterations fit within the ethos of the group.

- The Compact or Conspiracy allows the Hunter to switch up to one Code-based Breaking Point at each level. Suggestions for what to replace and what to replace it with will be detailed in "Lines in the Sand" sections for the new Compacts and Conspiracies, although

other replacements may be allowed if they fit the ethos of the group, per Storyteller discretion. The new Code tenets are always at the Low Integrity level. A Hunter may not have modifications to their code from more than one Compact or Conspiracy at a time.

-The Hunter, when facing a Breaking Point or Breaking Point Modifier related to a monster, may tell themselves (or be told by their group), "This is not truly a monster" - they make an Exception. A Hunter may make only one Exception, which must be limited to a specific class and/or category of Supernatural (such as "Nobility," "Those actively resisting their monstrous urges," or "Werewolves accepting our treatment and experimentation.") Such Exceptions count as people for the purposes of Breaking Points. A Hunter may make an Exception at any tier, but Compacts and Conspiracies will allow for only one specific Exception, if that. These Exceptions will also be detailed in "Lines in the Sand" sections. Making such an Exception bends the Code almost to breaking, and the backlash is not merciful; the penalty to Social Rolls with other Hunters who are aware of the Exception and do not share it themselves is increased to -5, and being betrayed by a monster you've made an Exception for is a Breaking Point of Low Integrity with a -5 modifier.

-Accepting the modified Code of a Compact or Conspiracy does not come lightly. A Hunter who leaves a Compact or Conspiracy may abandon the group's tenets and revert to the baseline Code; this is a Breaking Point at a level equal to the lowest-level tenet that was swapped out this way.

As a final note, Princesses in this supplement have Dread Powers. Without modifications to one's Code, they count as monsters.

## Creating a Princess

Though Princesses are a bit of a unique case among the creatures of the Night, and have a more ambiguous place in the Vigil than other monsters, they still are considered as "monsters" as far as rules are concerned for simplicity's sake. Build a Princess the same way you'd build any monsters according to the rules from the corebook (**Hunter the Vigil 2E**, p162), but with the adjustments described below:

- **Attributes and Skills:** Princesses have their Attributes and Skills distributed between two forms according to the Dual Form Dread Power (see below).
- **Dread Powers:** In addition to usual, all Princesses get the following Dread Powers for free: Invoking, Dual Form.
- **Advantages:** Princesses usually have a size between 4 and 6, depending on their age, though Dread Powers might allow them to grow or shrink further. They do have Integrity.
- **Weakness:** Princesses suffer from the Bane of **Hyper-Empathy**. Whenever they suffer emotional shock, commit or witness an act of emotional cruelty, they must roll

their Potency; on a success, they lose 1 Willpower and cannot apply their Defense nor act this turn.

## Dread Powers

When Transformed, Princesses can have any form of Dread Powers, their powers being as varied as mages; most of the fight-oriented ones have the ability to summon weapons (often wands or swords), which can be represented either by Dread Attack (**Hunter the Vigil 2E, p. 167**) or Numen: Blast (**Hunter the Vigil 2E, p. 169**). Based on the various Court, some of their other abilities are more recurrent than others:

- The **Court of Clubs** favors abilities focused on healing, defense, or nature. Animal Shift (**Hunter the Vigil 2E p166**) can be used to represent their ability to shapeshift into animals. They usually dislike killing or hurting their opponents, so abilities meant to neutralize without harm are common.
- The **Court of Diamonds** favors powers focused on enhanced intelligence, learning about their opponents and control over ice and water. Know Soul (**Hunter the Vigil 2E p168**) is one of their most common abilities.
- The **Court of Hearts** prefers abilities enhancing their ability to act as leader, win trust and enhance their social skills. Cloak of Authority and Mixed Blessing (**Mortal Remains pp. 146-147 and 154 respectively**) are frequent choices. The most powerful ones may have Revelation (**Mortal Remains pp. 153-154**)
- The **Court of Spades** tend toward abilities that enhance speed, help in trickery or allow them to go unnoticed. They almost always have Uncanny Reflexes (**Mortal Remains p. 157**). Confuse (**Hunter the Vigil, pp. 277-278**) is also common among them.
- The **Court of Swords** tend to have a good balance of abilities, but their powers frequently involve fire manipulation. This can be represented by Dread Powers such as Blast and Elemental Form (**Mortal Remains, pp. 147 and 149 respectively**).
- The **Court of Tears** tend to have the darkest powers, focused on shadows, ghosts and exploiting mortals. They almost always have the Willpower variant of Drain (**Hunter the Vigil p. 278**) and Hypnotism (**Hunter the Vigil pp. 279-280**). Lurker in Darkness (**Hunter the Vigil p. 280**), Shadow Harvest and Tendrils (**Hunter the Vigil p. 282**) are also frequent with them.
- The **Court of Storms**, being the berserkers they are, have the most destructive powers. They practically always have Balefire (**Hunter the Vigil p. 277**), Fury (**Hunter the Vigil, p. 279**) and Blast.
- The **Court of Mirrors** primarily focuses on abilities enhancing their own skills and causing people to admire and idolize them. These include Ecstasy (**Hunter the Vigil p. 279**), Impress (**Hunter the Vigil p. 280**) and Unholy Attribute (**Hunter the Vigil p. 283**). Like Hearts, they frequently have Revelation.



In addition, all Princesses have access to the following new Dread Powers:

### Dual Form

Perhaps the best-known ability of Princesses is their power to switch between two forms with different identities: one mortal, and another supernatural.

When choosing the number of dots for Attributes and Skills while building the Princess, distribute them between “mundane” and “transformed” dots.

Mundane dots are used first to build the “human form”, which is treated as a mortal; it registers as human when exposed to any supernatural detection, has no overtly supernatural features, and cannot raise any of its Attributes and Skills above 5 regardless of the Potency. It also *usually* doesn’t have access to Dread Powers, though exceptions aren’t unheard of.

Transformed dots are then *added* to the Princess’ stats when she assumes her Noble form, giving her an addition of both dots as her new stats; when Transformed, the Princess is now openly supernatural, and gets access to her Potency and full Dread Powers. Switching from one form to another takes an Instant action, or a Reflexive one if they spend 1 Willpower.

The primary advantage that comes with this Dread Powers is that it allows to have two separate identities that are difficult to connect; regardless of how much the Princess’ appearance changes between forms, Hunters *cannot* recognize her as the same person in both forms, nor can they easily connect the two based on coincidences; they will just shrug it off and go on. Should more blatant evidence begin to pile up, uncovering the connection requires an Investigation with five Clues. If Hunters attempt to use the Profiling Tactic against them to figure out their human identity, Princesses get 8-Again on rolls to contest.

All Princesses get this Dread Power for free.

### Invoking

Princesses are beings of emotions and convictions; they literally are powered by their beliefs, and as such are at their strongest whenever they follow it. By channeling her ideals, a princess can raise her abilities to spectacular levels.

This Dread Power is reflexive and doesn’t require a roll. Pick one of the Princess’ Aspiration; said Aspiration should preferably relate to her ideals or how she wishes to change the world. Whenever she follows that Aspiration, she may risk Willpower to add a bonus equal to her Potency or 5 (whichever is lower) to the pool of a Dread Power used while pursuing it. If

used on Dread Attack or Blast, the bonus is added to the attack roll (*not* the Damage Modifier).

All Princesses get this Dread Power for free.

#### Sidebar: Court Aspirations

The system regarding Ideal Aspirations is willingly left looser and less fleshed out than the Invocation system from **Princess: the Hopeful**; Though hunters are aware of the existence of Courts, they do not fully understand how Invocations work, and do not get the concept beyond “Princesses channel their goals and convictions into power”. It is also meant to allow players to come up with Princesses fitting in no specific courts for the sake of a good plot. If you wish to integrate the Courts within the story, though, here are suggested Ideal Aspirations to represent them:

- **Clubs:** Ensure harmony with the world, solve conflicts peacefully, never start a fight.
- **Diamonds:** Spread knowledge among people, solve problems through tactics and analysis, never lie or deceive people.
- **Hearts:** Enter the system to improve it from the inside, uphold and improve traditions, never be willingly rude to someone.
- **Spades:** Subvert the law when it gets in the way of good, solve problems by thinking outside the box, never impose your authority on anyone.
- **Swords:** Protect the ones you love, fight with passion, never hurt your loved ones.
- **Tears:** Protect your loved ones, relatives and nation at all cost. Never let your morals get in the way of this.
- **Storms:** Destroy the Darkness whenever and wherever you find it. Never show mercy to your enemies.
- **Mirrors:** Wait for destiny to hand you victory on a platter, prove to everyone that you alone are the best. Never let anything or anyone belittle you.

#### Knighting

A power particularly well-known, this Dread Power allows a Princess to share part of her power with a mortal, usually through some form of grandiose Ceremony. The Hopeful have been known to use this frequently to empower their allies, including sometimes Hunters - with the Light Company being no doubt the best-known example.

The Princess must spend 1 Willpower to activate this power, and the target must be a consenting mortal or hunter who fully understands the implications. On a success, the target gets the Sworn merit for free with one of the Princess' Dread Powers attached to it.

Princesses may not use this power on evil individuals or people with the Vice-Ridden merit, but should this Dread Power be used by other monsters (a wizard granting powers to his cult, for example), such limitation wouldn't apply.

Knighting Fealty may not be made into a Bequest.

### Beautiful Elite

Idols are well-known to be self-imbued when it comes to their own beauty, convinced that being pretty makes them somehow superior to everyone. But some of them put it even further, using their magic to force this logic on reality and effectively making themselves faster and stronger just based on their attractiveness.

Only Princesses with the Striking Looks merit may take this Dread Power; upon a success, it allows them to benefit from the bonus granted by Striking Looks on *any* action instead of just social rolls using appearance. The effect lasts for a number of turns equal to the activation successes.

### Cleanse the Soul

An ability particularly envied by Hunters, this power allows Princesses to "cure" a recently corrupt mortal from the sickness that is the Darkness, effectively turning them back into regular humans. Obviously, it has its limits; Lurkers are beyond salvation, and even Infiltrators can prove a challenge to purify if they have been in the Darkness' grasp for too long. But it's still a cure, and in the Vigil, you have to take what you can.

Regardless of the chosen pool, this Dread Power costs 2 Willpower to activate, is an extended action, and requires success equal to the targeted Monster's Resolve + Potency. Said Monster may resist with his resolve if he is unwilling, and must have at least 1 Integrity left; he must also be unable to fight back. Each time the target number of success is reached, the Princess may remove 1 of the Monster's Dread Powers; if the target has no Dread Power left, reaching the target number of success one more time reverts it back to a normal human.

Normally, this Dread Power only works on the Darkness, but should you wish for it, you may adjust it to work on other types of Monsters should you use it for a different creature.

### Merciful

Princesses typically dislike killing their opponents, but still need to be able to do so when needed. For this reason, many have weapons allowing them to switch between a lethal and nonlethal mode. Even if the Princess is fighting with a sword or shooting at people with a

gun, the weapon will somehow merely knock the enemies out rather than actually slaying them, unless their owner really *has* a killing intent.

This Dread Power is reflexive and requires no roll to activate, but must be applied on either Dread Attack or Blast (from the Numen Dread Power). The Princess can reflexively will said Dread Power to inflict bashing instead of lethal whenever she wishes.

## Blessing

Given they primarily focus on helping people, it's no surprise many Princesses share the ability to cast blessings upon mortals, granting them uncanny luck or skills for a time. Of course, nothing prevents them from using it on their allies or themselves as well.

When taking this Dread Power, pick one category of action (attack, mental, social, domain...). By spending 1 Willpower, the Princess may bless a target, granting it a +3 bonus for a number of actions of the chosen category equal to her Potency. This effect cannot be stacked with itself.

## Purgation

One of the few ritualistic Nobles' abilities, this power allows them to destroy a Corrupted Place entirely, burning it to the ground in green flames. It's typically used by Princesses of Storms, though members of other Courts sometimes resort to it when they find a Place so powerful it cannot be purified.

In order to activate this Dread Power, a Princess must spend 2 Willpower and inflict herself 1 Aggravated damage, dripping her blood on the area. She then rolls an extended action with a target number equal to the Corrupted Place's Potency, with Integrity as her Dice pool. Upon reaching the threshold, the blood ignites, producing a torch-sized green flame which will then propagate through the Nest. This is represented by the Inferno Tilt, with the following modifications: humans suffer no damage from it, while the damage is upgraded to *Aggravated* for anything and anyone touched by the Darkness.

Only beings with Integrity may use this power.

## Purification

Very reminiscent of exorcisms and abjurations, this ritual is frequently used by Radiant Nobles to temporarily neutralize Corrupted Places until a more permanent solution can be found. Bequests containing this particular Dread Power are prized possessions among hunters, especially the Light Company, as it offers an efficient way to handle Spawn Nests.

This Dread Power costs 3 Willpower to activate, requires an Integrity roll, is an extended action with a target number equal to the Corrupted Place's Potency, an interval of 10 minutes, and may be accomplished as a teamwork action. Once the threshold is reached, the Place's corruption goes dormant; it's still there, but all its Dread Powers and Aspirations cease to function, and Spawns lose their free Unnatural Step ability related to this place. Once per day however, subtract the Corrupted Place's Potency to this Dread Power's activations successes; when the successes reach 0, Purification's effect ends.

Only beings with Integrity may use this power.

#### Sidebar: Can I use them for something else?

Some of these powers may be suitable for other supernatural creatures with some aesthetic modifications, such as representing Armor of the Maiden as toughened skin, or Merciful as an ability used by a Beast who prefers to keep its victims alive so it can "play" with them. Keep in mind when doing so that other supernatural creatures will not be able to apply Enhancement dots as Nobles can.

## Wandering Monsters

### Cheryl Wilson, the Monster Keeper

*"I don't care if he is a monster. That doesn't give you the right to kill him."*

An unfortunate truth many Hunters aren't comfortable with, but usually end up learning, is that not all monsters are pure evil. While many of them certainly are irredeemable fiends, there are just as many who really just want to be left alone, or even are trying to do good. These are the ones the Noble known as the Monster Keeper makes her duty of protecting. Originally a young girl named Cheryl Wilson, this particular Princess grew up in a small, but reasonably happy family, with loving parents and a little brother named Lee. She was a good-hearted kid, and got along pretty fine with him, often acting protective; they had their arguments, like any sibling, but overall they were rather close.

At some point when they were teenagers, however, something changed with Lee. It's not clear what exactly happened to him, but the boy went through a transformation, and became a monster. Cheryl and her parents were confused about what happened to him, but they still tried to take care of him and live with his curse, as he would wake up crying at night and insisting he did not want to hurt anyone.

Then came the day where a man came to the home and tried to murder Lee, insisting the boy was a monster. When she saw this lunatic trying to kill her beloved little brother she had seen crying for weeks, something inside Cheryl snapped, and she went through a transformation of her own, becoming a Noble. With her newfound power, she was able to defeat the man and save her brother. Having herself gone through a supernatural

transformation of her own, she grew even closer to him, and swore she would never let anyone ever hurt him for what he was.

Ever since, the two siblings have become even more inseparable than they already were, and regularly travel, looking for other supernatural beings like them who get hunted down like animals. Whenever they find one, they observe from a distance, trying to figure out if they are dealing with a real monster who needs to be stopped, or a victim of the consequences. If he proves the former, they let the local hunters do their job, and might even give them tips in the case of a really bad seed. If the latter, however, the Princess does everything in her power to defend the creature. She will usually try diplomacy first, but should the hunters prove impossible to reason with, or worse, not care, she will unleash all her power on them. Unfortunately for the two siblings, they often find out things aren't quite as simple and clear-cut as they wish it was. Lastly, Cheryl has found herself faced with a lot of situations where there was no clear innocent to defend: monsters who didn't mean to cause any harm but still were a threat to people despite their best efforts, or who did harm people but still had families they were trying to protect. As more and more cases like this show up, she finds it harder to pick a side. Moreover, there are some supernaturals who feel she is a bad influence among their kind; Beasts who see her as tempting them away from their duty to teach mortals lessons, werewolves who accuse her and her brother of indoctrinating their packmates, and Prometheans who see her as a spiritual dead end, making them dependent on her light rather than striving to undergo the Pilgrimage to gain their own. She isn't without her enemies, and one day this might catch up with her...

**Description:** In her mundane form, Cheryl is a teenager of Asian descent, going toward her late seventeenth. She looks attractive enough for her age, though unkempt, as she travels too often to concern herself with cosmetics. She usually dresses in male clothes, with preference for jeans and hoodies.

In her Transformed state, the Monster Keeper gains a slight tan to her skin, and her body becomes considerably more athletic. She wears light armor reminiscent of an amazon, with red and gold colors and a flame motif. She is armed with a distinctive spear.

**Storytelling Hints:** Cheryl is designed to push hunter players to question themselves, to realize that some monsters are people and not just devilish abominations. Depending on the choices you make, she can play different roles, either as a supporting character or an antagonist. One should, however, avoid playing her as "stupid good" or naive- she does realize monsters can be dangerous, and understands the need for people to protect their family against them. Ideally, she is intended less as a physical opponent and more as one raising moral dilemmas for the players: she could, for example, take the defense of a monster who genuinely wishes to atone, but against whom the players have a personal vendetta due to him killing a loved one.

Alternatively, if you do not wish to raise such questions, there is another use to the character; thanks to her history of helping supernaturals over her travels, Cheryl has a lot of contacts and allies among them, making her the ideal source of information if the players need something... as long as she is sure of their intentions.

## Profile

**Virtue:** Just- Cheryl is aware many supernatural creatures are monsters and deserve to die, but she would rather preserve the ones who genuinely aspire to be better because she feels they deserve a second chance.

**Vice:** Wrathful- while she is overall well-intentioned and nice, she is very hard to calm down once she actually gets angry. Abusing her trust in particular is something she will have a hard time forgiving; should you bring her proof a supernatural being has been using her kindness to deceive her, she will happily join hunters in slaughtering him.

**Court:** Swords

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2(3), Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** Investigation 3 (4), Medicine 1, Occult 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletic 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2 (Cities), Weaponry 3 (5)

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2 (Sense motives), Persuasion 2 (3), Socialize 1 (Supernaturals), Streetwise 2

**Merits:** Contacts 5 (Vampires, Beasts, Prometheans, Werewolves, Sin-Eaters), Allies 2 (Changelings), Fast Reflexes 3

**Health:** 8

**Dread Powers:** Dread Attack 1, Merciful 1, Armor of the Maiden 1, Elemental Form 2 (Fire)

**Inner Light/Potency:** 3

**Enhancement:** 3

**Ideals:** Protect innocent monsters, defend her loved ones.

**Integrity:** 7

**Willpower:** 7

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9 (10)

**Defense:** 5

**Initiative:** 7

**Armor:** (1)

- **Regarding Lee:** Lee's nature as a supernatural was intentionally left ambiguous in the story above, so the Storyteller could adapt him to what he wants for his story. He could be a vampire, a Beast, a werewolf, or even another unknown type of supernatural being that hasn't been identified yet. You should build him as whatever fits with the normal rules for creating a Monster in **Hunter the Vigil**; the key part of his character is that he is a creature of the night usually fought by hunters, who happen to have a very protective Noble for a sibling. Design him with a Potency of 2.

## Carlin Sanders, the Green Knight

### *[Stoic silence]*

Task Force VALKYRIE is infamously known for putting special efforts in hunting down the Hopeful compared to most Conspiracies, but one thing not quite as well-known is that they have themselves become the target of a Noble. A member of the Court of Storm, the ENE known as the Green Knight has been hunting down several high-ranking members of the organization ever since their first appearance in Washington DC, a few years ago. The few who managed to get a good look at them describe an individual of unknown gender, fully dressed in green and silver armor, taking down their target with military accuracy and collateral damage worthy of a terrorist attack. While they have so far yet to inflict lasting damages to TFCV, their actions have still proven problematic, and several squads have been sent to take them down, in vain so far; to this day, the Green Knight's true identity remains a mystery, as does how they have access to restricted areas and information that most people couldn't possibly even know about.

Of course, the truth, which many people in Project Twilight have started to suspect but cannot prove yet, is that the Green Knight knows all this information about TFCV because they are- or rather *she is*- working for them. Her real name is Carlin Sanders, and she is one of the main experts in charge of collecting information for field agents through the Eye of Odin. Problem is, she did her job a little too well, and started making research on members of the Conspiracy itself. This led her to realize just how corrupt its hierarchy was; she discovered the majority of their budget was provided by vampires, and identified many Infiltrators among the higher ranks of the government. Initially, this left her in dismay and depression; she knew she couldn't just warn her superiors, as this would only get her in trouble. However, she refused to give up, and tried her best to figure out a solution. She personally believes it was this refusal to give in to despair that triggered her transformation into a Noble, granting her the power she needed to accomplish her goal.

She immediately started using her free time to practice self-defense, get in shape and learn military Tactics, meticulously preparing herself for her quest. Once she thought herself ready, she started making a list. She knew she couldn't kill the vampires yet-- not without crippling the entire Conspiracy, but the Infiltrators could still be dealt with. And so, she started tracking down and assassinating the Infiltrators hidden among TFCV's higher ranks, building the reputation she got today.

To this date, thanks to Dual Identity and careful preparation on Carlin's part, nobody has yet been able to figure out she is the Green Knight. However, she knows any error on her part could burn her cover, and more than likely people will find out eventually. But she doesn't care; all that matters is how much she can purify her group before this is found out.

**Description:** In her mundane form, Carlin is an Indian woman in her thirties, with black hair she keeps into a bun. She wears glasses and dresses in clothes too big for her, using them to hide the muscles she gained through her training and work-out; seemingly, she keeps the facade of a meek, introverted employee to hide the rage burning inside her mind.



As the Green Knight, she gets slightly taller, and wears a full-body green and silver armor hiding all her features; the breastplate isn't even form-fitting, making it impossible to figure out her true gender, and the helmet covers the entirety of her face, with a visor for the eyes. She avoids speaking while in this form, focusing on killing her quarry as fast as possible, but should she still say something, her voice would come out as distorted, as if she was using a voice synthesizer. She is armed with a strange, spear-like gun, which she can use to shoot devastating bolts of green flames.

**Storytelling Hints:** Make no mistake, Carlin might stick to her hope that Task Force VALKYRIE can be brought back on track, but she is still a Princess of Storms at heart; at the end of the day, she cares more about purifying it than about redeeming it. She has no problem slaughtering bystanders and field agents who get in her way to the Infiltrators, seeing them as necessary sacrifices, nor would she think twice before burning down TFV bases which have become Nests, even if this might cripple the entire Conspiracy. Part of her still would rather avoid useless victims, but she won't stop if she thinks it's necessary, because she knows her power will get weaker otherwise. She can still be reasoned with if the players are sufficiently good at social maneuvering and somehow find a way to discover her true identity (she definitely isn't open to discussion on the battlefield), but this wouldn't be easy, and definitely would make her lose her Court. That said, trying to defeat her in combat isn't easy either- aside from her obvious powers and fighting skills, she is a cunning opponent who plays smart and knows most of the tactics used by Task Force VALKYRIE, including the ones employed against Nobles.

### Profile

**Virtue:** Faithful- Carlin does believe in what Task Force VALKYRIE is doing, but feels the organization has to be purified in order to be brought back on track. She kills out of fanatical devotion more than anything else.

**Vice:** Violent- she is good at hiding it behind her "shy scientist" persona, but Carlin has a lot of repressed aggression caused by her frustration over the corruption of her group, and she tends to express it as the Green Knight.

**Court:** Storms

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2(3), Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Computer 3, Investigation 3, Occult 3(4), Politics 2 (Task Force VALKYRIE)

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth 3

**Social Skills:** Subterfuge 4

**Merits:** Status 2 (Task Force VALKYRIE), Danger Sense 2, Fast Reflexes 3, Eidetic Memory 2, Area of Expertise (Task Force VALKYRIE)

**Health:** 8

**Dread Powers:** Blast 2 (Direct Damage), Armor of the Maiden 2, Dance Between the Bullets 1, Purgation 2

**Inner Light/Potency:** 3

**Enhancements:** 4

**Ideals:** Preserve her secret identity, Destroy the Darkness wherever it is.

**Integrity:** 5

**Willpower:** 5

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10(11)

**Defense:** 6

**Initiative:** 9

**Armor:** (3)

- **Note:** Despite technically being part of Task Force VALKYRIE, Carlin Sanders is in charge of collecting information, not a field agent, and did not get a chip in her brain. As such, her status does not give her access to Advanced Armory.

## Story Hooks

### Prison Break

**Summary:** A group of Nobles has assaulted a base of operations for a group of Hunters and freed several prisoners, including both humans and suspected supernatural beings. The player's cell seeks to track down the escapees and (depending on their goals), assist, recapture, or destroy them. Of course, they'll also probably want to figure out what could have motivated the Hopeful into acting like this...

**Setup:** The prisoners the Nobles freed were innocent (or at least as innocent as a supernatural creature can be), and may even include friends of them they have been trying to help deal with their dark urges. Will the hunters place the priority on the mission and fight the Nobles to decide the fate of the monsters themselves? Or sympathize with them and let the Nobles handle things, at the risk of endangering the community or attracting themselves the ire of their superiors?

**Tier One:** The characters know one of the captives personally, and the Nobles' assault may very well occur while the Hunters are planning their own breakout attempt. The attempts of the Hunters to bring the freed supernaturals under control are likely to be complicated by the reaction of their freed ally; are they grateful to the Nobles who freed them, concerned about the freed monsters, or even supportive of the methods used to hold the monsters in the first place? The Hunters who took the humans and monsters prisoner in the first place are a local cell themselves, and the damages they sustained in the Nobles' assault will likely drive them to desperate measures in an attempt to recapture their prisoners and regain control.

**Tier Two:** The characters are experienced enough and know the area well enough to notice when supernatural beings start disappearing. Once the Nobles' breakout goes down, the cell is likely to encounter at least one supernatural among the captives that is new to them, and the Nobles, captives, and captors are likely a convergence of the supernatural on a scale that the characters are unused to. The base is well-equipped, a tempting target to compact

members who want to enhance the power of their compact (or at least their place in it), and the characters will have to deal with the base's original owners and members of their own compact who want a cut of the spoils.

**Tier Three:** The characters are sent by their superiors to investigate the gradual dip followed by a sudden spike in supernatural activity. As they take down one escaped (and enraged) threat after another, they run into both the Nobles and reinforcements for the group that imprisoned the monsters in the first place, with each side trying to recruit them in their war against the other (unless the characters themselves are the reinforcements). The base itself is a major base of operations for the group running it, and its resources and equipment may be as much the Nobles' and characters' target as the captives themselves. The captives themselves come from far and wide; the breakout was the first, but it won't be the last if the Nobles are not stopped.

## Safe Haven

**Summary:** An infestation of supernatural creatures has already caused several fatalities. At first it seems a contact of the cell is among them when they seemingly drop off the earth. But further investigation reveals that the contact was gathering supplies for some purpose. When the PCs spy a young person they don't know fighting the monsters and promising to take people to a place called Alhambra, "where they can be safe," the cell wonders if their contact is still alive, and if they can still be found.

**Setup:** Alhambra is a city in the Dark World where the Queen of Tears reigns. It is a sunless, hidebound medieval-style city where lamps keep away a darkness that destroys what it envelops and spawns monsters. The people who live here eke out a miserable existence subsisting on rainwater, seaweed, and fish, all of which taste like tears. Even their ghosts remain rather than admit that a better existence could be held elsewhere. Some come for safety, others to serve the last living Queen of an otherwise-lost Kingdom, but few if any have ever left. Most people would be forced to write off any mundane who enters Alhambra as lost to the world, but then the characters are not most people...

**Tier One:** The characters in a local cell consider the area their home. They'll have to handle the double-duty of dealing with the monsters while maintaining the hope of the local community before the Noble can lead more of them astray. The job will be complicated by the fact that they may need the Noble's help to handle the incursion - what happens when they demand the right to spread the news of Alhambra to others? It's too late to save their contact, but can the characters save other people from making the same mistake?

**Tier Two:** The cell has come to handle monsters, but they stay to deal with the Noble. Once they learn that their contact has been taken away, the characters may decide to take their revenge on the Noble. Depending on the compact, they may try to interrogate the Noble to learn about Alhambra, attempt to force the Noble to retrieve their contact, or put the Noble down before they can spirit anyone away. The ability of the Noble to reach such an area at all is likely to be of interest, with the characters seeking to prevent, document, or even replicate the ability for themselves.

**Tier Three:** The contact was ordered to take the offer. The task was to get into this “Alhambra,” do reconnaissance, and get out. But they never returned, and the cell is tasked by their superiors with the contact’s extraction. They can handle the supernatural monsters, but will that cause the Noble to stop making the offer? How can they make themselves enticing enough to be offered safety in Alhambra without coming off as too dangerous? And if they do get into Alhambra, how do they get themselves and their contact out? What if their contact doesn’t want to leave?

#### Sidebar: The Ghosts of Alhambra

*“Those aware of how ghosts behave on Earth will be surprised by Alhambra’s departed. For one, while they usually prefer to remain near the places or people they knew in life, they aren’t bound to them as Earthly ghosts are to anchors. They do not, in fact, have anchors at all; Alhambra’s departed regain Essence only from being remembered by the living. Being remembered, fortunately, is much easier for the venerable, as they need not take time or effort to manifest - they are always Materialized, and even tangible as long as they have even 1 point of Essence. (There is no such thing as Twilight in Alhambra, and thus no way for a ghost not to manifest....) Finally, the departed never have the Manifestations that allow a ghost to take over a living person (e.g. Fetter and Possess) and there is good reason to believe that those Manifestations don’t work inside the city.*

**-Princess: The Hopeful**, Vocation Version, Pages 282-283

Further information on Alhambra can be found in either version of **Princess: The Hopeful**.

#### Lightbringer Cult”

**Summary:** A new cult is spreading in town around a self-proclaimed goddess. They don’t seem particularly dangerous so far, in that they don’t practice any form of human sacrifice or unholy rites, but they still resort to a particularly impressive form of brainwashing that makes them obsessed with their leader and rely entirely on her for everything. Moreover, said leader and her inner circle definitely do have supernatural powers. It isn’t long before the PCs get involved to figure out what is going on.

**Setup:** The cult leader is a Noble, one from the Court of Mirrors to be specific; She is genuinely trying to protect the people around her, but her ego has gotten the better of her, and she has used her power to enhance her charisma to such a level people are forming a cult around her; her inner circle are Sworn, whom she granted part of her powers. She has no nefarious intentions, but as she grows more and more self-imbued, the characters are concerned that she might abuse her worshippers, forming her own harem and urging them to give up their life to serve her. How will the PCs handle her? Will they try to bring her to reason, or take her down before she becomes dangerous?

**Tier One:** One of the cult members is a friend or family of the characters, who have come to free them. The cult member refuses to leave, citing the goodness of their leader. How can the characters convince someone so wrapped up in the Noble’s charisma to leave before the

Noble is corrupted by their own power? Or worse, how can the characters convince them to leave when nothing of the sort happens?

**Tier Two:** A supernatural disaster is about to occur in the area, and the characters have come to deal with it. They find the cult unprepared and unconcerned, convinced that their Noble can easily handle it. One look at the Noble and the characters know that's not the case, but trying to take control of the situation will draw the ire of the Noble and their cult. The characters will have to try to either turn the cult to their side or at least get them to evacuate before their complacency gets them killed.

**Tier Three:** The Noble has converted an entire community to her cause. They've created a utopia of kindness and interconnectedness, and in doing so have made it the target of every supernatural (and some natural) conspiracy for miles around. The characters are part of this, sent by their superiors to see how this can benefit them. The community soon becomes a hive of intrigue as different groups seek to assist, exploit, or bring down the community before it can spread. Led by their powerful Noble, the community themselves may be good-natured saps that make for easy targets or scarily efficient devotees that can go up against any of the outside groups.

## The Darkness

### Creating a Dark being

Though Spawns of the Darkness comes in all shapes and sizes, these rules are meant to use them as npc. Build them as Monsters, with the following alterations:

- **Potency:** Potency functions as normal, but has the ability to be increased (see **The Darkness Grows** below)
- **anchors:** Spawns invert the way their Anchors works; fulfilling their Virtue only allows them to recover 1 Willpower, while fulfilling their Vice refills their entire Willpower.
- **Dread Powers:** In addition to the usual Dread Powers, all Dark beings get the following following Dread Powers for free: Predator's Sense (Light-Touched), Unnatural Step (Corrupted Places)
- **Advantages:** Dark Beings may be of any Size, though Infiltrators usually stay human in shape and Size. Lurkers use the *highest* of Wits of Dexterity to calculate their defense, and have no Integrity traits. Some Infiltrators *may* have Integrity left if they aren't too far gone, but automatically lose 1 Integrity per Dread Powers they have.
- **Weakness:** All Dark Beings, regardless of their type, share a weakness to Jade, and treat it as their Bane. Infiltrators are slightly less hurt by it than Lurkers, as such only suffers lethal damage from its contact.

## The Darkness Grows

The Power of the Darkness comes from everything bad and dark inside the human mind: hatred, cruelty, sadness, pain and madness. The more these things grow, the more its Spawns grow in power. Creatures of the Darkness grow stronger in hostile, cruel environments, while safe, peaceful and happy places make it hard for them to fester. This is both a good and bad thing for hunters: on the one hand, it means that areas where people are happy and living well will be relatively protected merely by being so, as Spawns, if there are any, will be weak and relatively easy to deal with; on the other hand, if you take too long to actually take care of the infection, they grow in power *much* faster than, say, a vampire, and before you know it the small rat-like creatures who were devouring the neighborhood's pets have evolved into hulking monsters who now prey on bums and children.

Whenever a Dark being (be it an Infiltrator or Lurker) causes a mortal or Princess to lose Integrity by failing a Breaking point, roll 10 - victim's new Integrity. If you get more successes than the Dark being's current Potency, its Potency immediately is increased by 1, and all the Storyteller may adjust its stats and Dread Powers accordingly.

## Dread Powers

Spawns of the Darkness frequently grow in power as their morality decays, causing hideous mutations and warping their body. The more their moral integrity decays, the more they will start to turn into monsters. That said, this doesn't mean the more human-looking ones are weaker- many make up for their lack of mutations by using some form of dark magic against their opponents.

Infiltrators cannot have more Dread powers involving a physical deformation or enhancement (such as some variants of Dread Attack) than 10 - Integrity. If their Integrity drops over the course of the Chronicle, they can immediately gain one such Dread Power at no cost.

Powers not involving such changes do not suffer from this restriction, but using them causes a breaking point as an additional cost to the Willpower spent.

Lurkers do not have any restrictions regarding how many physical Dread Powers they can have; whatever humanity they had is far gone, and they count as having no Integrity Trait at all whenever that would be relevant.

Regarding their abilities in general, Spawns tend to focus on harming people, often through grotesque mutations, manipulating the mind or other creative ways. Dread Attack and Drain are almost always present, especially for Lurkers. Infiltrators' abilities tend to be a bit more subtle, such as Damnation or Agonize, though some of them do have more overt supernatural powers. Black Gate is also frequent, usually connected to a Dark Nest. Should

you give them any element-related ability, they should have ice-based powers; the Darkness tends to be cold and drains the warmth around it.

Spawns of the Darkness also have access to the following new Dread Powers:

### Contagion

Everyone is familiar with the concept of zombies and vampires capable of turning their victims into more of them. Unfortunately, some Spawns display a similar ability, sacrificing a bit of their power to cause their victim to rise as servants.

This Dread Power doesn't require a roll and is reflexive; Whenever a monster with this ability kills someone, he immediately loses a dot of Potency, and the mortal he kills rises as a mindless servant with the same template as him. This risen creature retains all the Attributes and Skills he had while alive, and gains 2 dots of Dread Powers his creator had. Should the monster's potency fall to 0 as a result of this Dread Powers, it dies.

### Infectious Speech

Infiltrators are named this way for a reason: they look more human so they can go undercover in human society, corrupting it from the inside to create more of them. Usually, this involves luring people into Nests, where they can be more easily corrupted; Unfortunately, some don't even need to do that; with nothing but a few words, and by sacrificing a small part of their power, they are capable of infecting people even outside of Nests, creating more of their kind on the spot. This ability is pretty rare, but hunters who find a being capable of such a thing usually waste no time getting rid of it.

This Dread Power costs 1 Willpower to activate, should preferably be a social roll, and is penalized by the target's Integrity. Activate it before or after a mortal character lost Integrity as a result of a Breaking point; if successful, the mortal gains the Infected Condition (see the Nest section)

### Monster Lord

Only owned by some Infiltrators and the most powerful Lurkers, this ability grants a Spawn the ability to control his peers. Creatures gifted with this ability usually are smarter than most, making them particularly dangerous as they can organize the monsters.

This Dread Power is reflexive and *usually* doesn't require a roll, though some weaker infiltrators have been known to require a ritual to activate it.

Whenever the monster encounters beings of the same type as his (typically Dark beings, but the Dread Power may be applied to another type) but with lower Potency, he is recognized as their Apex, and they obey him regardless of how long they have known one another. He may control them telepathically, and organize them as he wishes.

The control is permanent as long as the Spawn keeps his servants close by; should they get separated from him for more than his Potency in hours, they will forget about their master and return to their usual feral state. To the Storyteller's description, some very powerful Spawns might be able to maintain control for a Week instead.

### Poisonous Blood

Some Spawns are corrupted down to their very blood, making their bodily fluids filled with something necrotic and revulsive. This makes them terribly dangerous, as they can poison you with their mere touch.

This Dread Power's effects are permanent and do not require a roll. Whenever the Spawn touches someone barehanded, he automatically inflicts him a moderate Sick Tilt. If he somehow injures someone with his natural weapons (even bashing damages), he inflicts a grave Sick Tilt.

### Sense Integrity

Spawns of the Darkness like to prey on innocents, which is the primary reason many of them favored young children as their prey. As such, it only makes sense that many of them possess the ability to gauge a person's moral integrity in order to better lure out the most innocent ones. In addition, this ability can be used to find people vulnerable to their corruption, so they can easily create more of them.

On a normal success, this Dread Power allows the Spawn to assess a character's Integrity rating. Storytelling-wise, this is phrased in terms of the worst sins that the character has no problem with (for example, "This character has no issue with non-lethal violence against his fellow men"). On an exceptional success, he also learns the worst sin the character has committed. Moreover, he has a permanent +2 social bonus against all characters with the Vice-Ridden Merit.

### Corrupted Places

Compared to other monsters, the Darkness has a special relation with Tainted Places; they seem to be drawn to such places, often building their nests here and festering within its shadows like grotesque bugs. Sometimes, though, they do more than just live there; their corruption seems to grow outward, spreading in the area and warping it. The place becomes beyond Tainted; it's now Corrupted, becoming just as nightmarish as its inhabitants, producing more of them and expanding into some sort of nightmarish realm. They often are filled with Infiltrators practicing their horrible sacrifices and rites, or Lurkers eager to drag more people into their sinister lair.



## Building a Corrupted Place

Corrupted Places essentially are an “evolution” of a Tainted Places, the emotions and tragedies in them magnified and mutated by the Darkness into a *presence*, something making it even more dangerous.

Mechanically, build a Corrupted Place the same way you would a Tainted Place, with the following adjustments:

- **Triggers:** Corrupted Places do not have Triggers; instead, they get between 1 and 3 Aspirations (up to the Storyteller), reflecting the horrors that happened in that place (killing someone, committing cannibalism, ritualistic sacrifice...), and which would always trigger Breaking Points. Characters entering the Corrupt Places automatically treat these Aspirations as additional Aspirations for themselves.
- **Dread Powers:** In addition to the usual Dread Powers, Corrupted Places gets the Dread Powers Corrupting Presence and Darkspape (see below). With the exception of Darkspape, all their Dread Powers use the Corrupted Place's Aspiration as triggers, activating whenever they would help the visitors fulfill the place's Aspirations or prevent them from going against them.
- **Other Threats:** Corrupted Places *always* are populated by Spawns of the Darkness, either Infiltrator Cultists, Lurkers, or both. These inhabitants always get the Home Ground Dread Power related to the Corrupted Place for free.

## Dread Powers for Corrupted Places

### Corrupting Presence

For all the horrible things you can be confronted with when visiting Dark Nests, there is a danger even more insidious. People who spend too much time in Nests, or let themselves go to their dark desires like it encourages them to, are at risk of getting infected and joining the ranks of the enemy.

This Dread Power may only be assigned to a Tainted or Corrupted Place, and doesn't require a roll to activate. Whenever a visitor does an action that would either fulfill the Place's Aspiration or activate a Trigger, he gets a bonus equal to the Place's Potency or 5 (whichever is lower) on his roll. However, doing so causes him to gain the Tainted Condition. If said action causes him a Breaking Point, he suffers a penalty equal to the bonus on his action, and a failure on the roll results in gaining the Darkened Condition.

## New Conditions: Darkened and Tainted

### Tainted (Persistent)

The character has been partly corrupted by a Corrupted Place. One of the place's Aspirations is rooted into his mind, felt as a nagging desire or a twisted fantasy he doesn't fully understand. He may fulfill that Aspiration at any time. If doing so causes a breaking point (which it very likely will) the results of the roll play out as if the character were still in the Corrupted Place, except that it cannot re-apply this Condition. (E.g. it can inflict Darkened.)

The seed of corruption within the character's soul inflicts nightmares. He cannot regain Willpower from sleep. Also, the touch of jade is mildly irritating to the character. This has no mechanical effect, and the character may not even notice it consciously, but an attentive observer might take note of his aversion to handling the gemstone.

Resolution: Fulfill the Corrupted Place's Aspiration.

### **Darkened (Persistent)**

Long exposure to Corrupted Places has infected the character. They have become a creature of the Darkness (specifically, an Infiltrator), with the abilities and drawbacks thereof, but haven't lost their Integrity yet.

Remaining in touch with human emotions and morals can protect the character from banes of the Darkness for a while. The first time in a scene that jade touches him, he rolls his Integrity as a dice pool. If he fails this roll, jade damages him as a Bane for the rest of the scene; if he succeeds, his flesh just breaks out in a lurid rash where the jade touches it, and the itching inflammation gives him a -2 penalty on all Physical actions until the contact is withdrawn. (Many Darkened first realized something was badly wrong with them when their jewelry burned their fingers.)

Resolution: The character makes a great sacrifice, either as restitution for his sins, or to save someone from death or grave injury; the character raises his Integrity to 8 or more. (Just having Integrity above 7 won't resolve Darkened - the character must buy at least one dot in the trait.)

Should the condition be resolved, the character immediately loses all the benefits, weaknesses and Dread Powers acquired from this state, and suffers 1 lethal damage for each dot of Dread Power lost. This means Infiltrators who have mutated far enough can actually be brought on the verge of death, or even killed, when cured. Using the Dread Power Cleanse the Soul (see the Noble Dread Power section) can also cure this condition.

Beat: The character expands the Size or deepens the Corruption of a Dark Nest.

Princesses, along with people with the Sworn Condition or the Beacon merits, are immune to this infection, though staying inside Corrupted Places still isn't healthy for them. Mere exposure to a Nest can trigger a Hyper-Empathy roll. Infiltrators and Lurkers obviously aren't

affected either, being already corrupted by the Darkness. Other supernatural creatures, such as vampires, mages, werewolves or Beasts, merely gain Conditions when they get a success on an Infection roll; hunters are divided on whether this immunity comes from the fact they already have ties to the Darkness, or because the unholy power they get their abilities from just doesn't like to share.

### Darkscape

Areas tainted by the supernatural are horrifying enough as they are, but some push it even further, containing doors that lead to even more warped, disturbing versions of themselves - usually some sort of hellish landscape populated with monsters.

This Dread Power may only be used by Corrupt and Tainted Places, and doesn't require a roll to be activated. Select a particular spot in the Place, usually a door or a similar entrance, which serves as the "Door" to the Darkscape, which can be identified through the Investigation rules. Said door can be crossed whenever its assigned Trigger is activated, or, if identified, by visitors spending 1 Willpower; inhabitants of the place may cross it without spending Willpower. Regardless, whoever crosses it immediately find themselves in a mirror, darker and blatantly supernatural version of the original place. What exactly this results into is up to the Storytellers; the Darkscape could have more inhabitants, more Dread Powers, and so on.

### Cleansing a Corrupted Place

Corrupted Place for the most part can be destroyed the same way you would any Tainted Place. However, there exist some other methods:

- Some Corrupted Places have a monster within their Darkscape who holds the place together; should that monster be killed, the place reverts back to normal;
- Virtuous actions meant to do good, surprisingly, seem to fight back the Corruption: organizing a charity event, a particularly successful party, or a play defending positive values can all help. Regardless of the type, this is an extended action with the Place's Potency as the target number; once the threshold is reached, the Corrupted Place reverts to normal. Though favored by Princesses, this method usually is nigh impossible to apply, as the Spawns in the area will do everything in their powers to sabotage the event.
- Some rituals used by Princesses can be used to destroy or cleanse Corrupted Places. See their Dread Powers section for more detail.

## The Broken

Nobles are far more than just very idealistic people. Their idealism, their belief, is part of their soul. It's where they get, not just their powers, but also their reason to live; it's what allows them to endure the suffering of everyone around them, and try to end it. To a Princess, it's as vital and integral to their being as their heart or their brain. As such, whenever they *do* snap, and give up all of their convictions, the results are far more devastating than for regular mortals.

A Noble at Integrity 1 who fails a breaking point roll returns to their mundane form, loses their Transformation item, and becomes near-catatonic. They cannot transform or even act, except to respond to the outside world in the barest of ways. By themselves, they can only waste away.

It is actually possible to get a Noble out of this state, though reports of how effective this is vary. In game terms, any close friend to a Noble can try to bring back some semblance of hope into her through Social Maneuvering, with Doors equal to the lowest of the Noble's Resolve and Composure, plus the penalty inflicted by a Shadows condition (if any). If successful, the Noble can be restored to Integrity 1 at the cost of 1 Willpower dot and regain her Transformation item. Hunters are unsure of what happens after that; some say the Noble dies peacefully in their sleep, their soul redeemed. Others say they can then proceed to rebuild their conviction and start over. Which one of these options is true is up to the Storyteller.

One thing hunters *do* know, however, is what happens when nobody is there to restore their hope, as they painfully found out when they first tried to exploit this weakness. As it turns out, Nobles who lose such a fundamental part of themselves, unable to be part of the Hopeful anymore, become... something else. It may take weeks, it may take moments (especially if the Noble's life is threatened), but eventually they start changing, suffering mutations reminiscent of the ones present in the Spawns they fight. Eventually they lose all human features, turning into shrieking monsters who destroy everything around them, before disappearing to an unknown destination.

Nobody really is quite sure why such a metamorphosis happens. Some believe this is the Hopeful abandoning any pretension of humanity, and reverting back to their true, monstrous forms. Others think it is their biology breaking apart as a result of losing such an essential part of themselves. The resulting creatures are known through many names inside the Vigil: Devils, Fallen, Shriekers. But Nobles just refer to them as the Dethroned.

## The Dethroned

The transformation from Noble to Dethroned is dramatic. No longer Light, but yet not Darkness, they become a true monster. Apply the following adjustments to the rules for building a Princess:

- **Dread Powers:** A Dethroned is locked permanently into their Transformed state, which becomes far more monstrous. They lose the Dual Form and Invoking Dread Powers, and may now buy Dread Powers normally accessible only to the Darkness.
- **Advantages:** Due to their mutations, Dethroned no longer are restrained to a human body, and thus can be of any Size. They also no longer have Integrity.
- **Weakness:** They retain the Ban of Hyper-Empathy, rolling their Potency and gaining 1 Willpower per success. This replaces the usual result of a Hyper-Empathy roll. They still gain 1 Willpower per day as normal.

A Dethroned makes their domain in the Dark World, at the counterpart to where a Nest opens into the Real World. If the Nest is destroyed, the Dethroned moves to a new Nest counterpart of the Dark World. Build a Dethroned's domain as if it was a Beast's Lair with one chamber, using Inner Night in place of Lair ("Lair Traits", H:tV Tooth and Nail 28). All environmental Tilts are assigned to this singular domain. As a guide, the Storyteller should build a Dethroned's domain such that it serves as either a direct or symbolic reminder of how far they have fallen.

Dethroned cannot leave the Dark World voluntarily, and anything that forces them into the Real World lasts one scene at most. A Dethroned may spend 4 Willpower to merge her domain in the Dark World with its real world counterpart for one scene. Once the scene has ended, the Dethroned remains in the Dark World, creatures of Darkness can choose which world they end up in, while all other characters return to the world above.

As impossible as it seems a Dethroned can be redeemed, but only by a Noble. A Dethroned whose health boxes are filled with Lethal or Aggravated Damage is susceptible to being reasoned with by a Noble. This is an extended Integrity roll with a threshold of the Dethroned's Inner Light and no limit to the number of rolls that can be made. The Noble gains the Shadows Condition when starting the process, and the penalty increases by one for each roll made. If the threshold is reached, the Dethroned's soul escapes the Dark World and takes residence in the Noble's soul.

To redeem a Dethroned, the Noble must resolve the Shadows Condition completely; forcing the Dethroned from the Noble's body or trying to shed the Condition without properly resolving it only causes the Dethroned to eject back into the Dark World. Each time the Shadows Condition would be resolved by a Noble with a Dethroned in their soul, instead reduce the Condition's penalty by 1. Once the penalty is reduced to zero the Condition is resolved, and the Dethroned's soul successfully passes on to the afterlife. The Noble finds

their own hope restored by the process, gaining two dots in Integrity and regaining full Willpower if successful.

#### Sidebar: What about the Dark World?

*"The worst images of a post-nuclear apocalypse Earth do not equal this place of rot and cold and damp and decay, but they do at least provide some fuel to the imagination."*

-Princess: the Hopeful, Dream 245, Vocation 230

In Princess: the Hopeful, the Dark World is a place where monsters come from, not where heroes or Hunters go to. Mechanics - the Dark World should always be an Extreme Environment of Level 1 or higher - and monster generation alone cannot convey the danger this area represents. Even when there are no monsters the world itself menaces unwelcome visitors with crumbling buildings, air that rots and freezes, and even more disturbing phenomena. The Dark World is a deathtrap, and even going in is a process that often tears away at one's soul and Integrity, to say nothing of coming back out. Anything stolen by creatures of Darkness into the Dark World is all but lost.

(Or is it? See "The Queens and the Darkness," pp. XX)

## Wandering Monsters

### Ben Vold, the Delaware Draug

*"You face the rage of the betrayed, little candle. Let my ship through, or be trawled in the dark seas it sails, as your body joins its crew."*

Hunters in Philly's ports, for the past two years, have increasingly three bits of advice for any peer nearby the two rivers-if you happen to be sailing the Delaware at night, keep an eye out for a towboat, painted black and blue with rusted paint, with two lights on either side, one flickering white, one solid blue, on each side, lighting the river like four eyes. If you see no boats, keep at least one buddy on watch at all times, because that's when it sneaks up on you, not emerging from the gap between the living world and the dead until it's nearly too late-if not completely too late, because you were stupid enough to not rig your boat for speed. This contemporary ghost ship, the *Ran*, is from the modern day, but her captain certainly isn't, nor is her crew. They say that a cell of amateur hunters, high on cocaine and too many pirate movies, got it into their heads to be Vigilant pirates, cutting the seas in search of monsters and various treasures the sea-going beasts had to have. Their first target was a fossilized longship with a ghostly Viking spirit attached that they were sure had to be the source of several sea-based nightmares around its native museum, and so when it was being transported for demonstration on a cargo ship, the brave, stupid crew of the *Ran* struck, using speedboats launched from their houseboat/base to strike at a poor ship filled with people who had no fucking clue why all these pirates were ransacking something from a

university. As one might imagine, they killed the crew to cover their tracks-which ended up awakening the formerly sleeping spirit of an ancient Norse nobleman who was peacefully dozing the eons away-as well as his entire cohort of warriors. Enraged at the dishonorable curs who dared call themselves warriors of justice, he and his men possessed the bodies of the cargo tanker's crew and slaughtered the hunters to a man, before commandeering their ship and sailing back to their home to ensure no kin of those cowards would disgrace the name of bravery again. If they catch you, say the hunters, they won't listen to your protestations of bravery, thinking it just a cowardly attempt at pleading for your life; if you're very stalwart, and very lucky, they *might* instead merely test you, letting you go free with merely a warning to never sail again and blaspheme the gods with your presence on the sea. If you fail, or you're not, well there aren't any stories from those survivors, shall we say.

As one might imagine, this takes a real thing and attaches a story which is complete and total dreck, and the fact that people are alive to tell it is probably proof of its bullshit, given how it makes several assumptions about Old Icelandic culture the undead jarl would probably find very offensive. There *is* a rusty old towboat sailing the Delaware, but it's not *Twilight* it dips in and out of-it's the Dark World. And its captain is indeed a monstrous warrior of the sea, but he's just as modern as the *Ran* itself, and he *was* the original hunter captain. And while he did fall to his own recklessness, it wasn't some irate medieval warrior which did him in, but his own grief.

Before he became the Delaware Draug, Ben Vold (which is itself an alias-he neither remembers nor cares for his original name) was a captain in a more terrestrial sense, the CO of several Task Force VALKYRIE cells near Philadelphia. He was, by all accounts, a stand-up, brave, and competent officer who his subordinates respected, though not to the point of love. Really, he was more a specialist in logistics than anything, making sure all the Advanced Armory requests arrived reasonably late and that all the ammo was stocked. Still, he was no coward, and he could fight on the frontlines as well as any of his subordinates. But it wasn't his first choice, not the least because unlike far too many hunters, he had a happy home life, and his family was aware of him working on dangerous, long-term missions for the government that he couldn't really talk about. His children were fine sorts too, all very involved with the world and with their father's boundless idealism well-represented.

The story of how the future Vold ended up killing his family is heavily classified and spun as far as VALKYRIE can while still not verging on total lies. The basic gist though, is that Vold was assigned to the grim duty of neutralizing a Noble in service to their well-intentioned invasion, this one a Hearts witch attempting to enforce her Queen's decrees on local politics. Due to a series of tragic mistakes, misadventures, a broken cell phone and sheer laziness from unrelated building inspectors, the college dorm where said Princess was staying was completely destroyed in a fireball as Vold looked on in horror as his wife and other two children sat down with his eldest daughter for Easter dinner. VALKYRIE's legion of shrinks tried all they could to put the captain's mind back together, but by that point, he had lost all

faith in his comrades, his country, or himself. While he seemed to recover some will to live, this was an illusion-what the psychologists thought was him becoming functional was really just the fires of hate giving him enough will to snap himself out of catatonia long enough to lure every one of his men and the support apparatus for said mission onto a then-normal towboat, before blowing the boiler and locking all of them inside the flooding cabins. The last person to meet the churning waves was himself, a sound that could have been laughter, screaming, or sobbing escaping his throat as the waters of the Delaware washed in.

*Something* came with the waters. The researchers into the Dark Spawn's origins, should they find out about his origin, would be divided as to whether this was raw Dark drawn by his despair and madness to swamp what little remained of sanity in his soul and weaponize his rage, an alien parasite born of the same and performing one last indignity on his corpse, or something in between. Whatever the case is, the newly-rechristened *Ran* somehow, impossibly, sank in reverse a few nights later, the bodies of the people killed in that initial drowning merged and mixed in every unclean manner with examples of life at the bottom of lake beds and the deep sea, all giving ululating praise to their captain-the only one among them that remained somewhat humanlike, at least on the outside. Inside, the Delaware Draug's mind has been twisted into something almost completely unrecognizable as having once been a human, a mishmash of the man he was, the Darkness incarnate he is, and half-remembered gargles of Norse mythology, born from idle curiosity of how VALKYRIE named its weapons leading to a minor hobby. To what passes for Ben Vold's mind, he is the hand of Hel, sent to gather the dishonored dead to make war on the living-and from there, the Aesir themselves on the fields of Ragnarok to smother the new world in its crib, and that all may remain dead and free of grief of being alive when those loved are not.

The reason he choses hunters to make into the dishonored dead is far more personal, however; Vold has not forgotten the recklessness of the Vigil that led to his creation, and so he hates his former peers for that reason-but really, it's because he can't stand to be reminded of what he lost. The "tests" have nothing to do with worthiness-in fact, he's looking for people that *fail*, and in so doing, lose things that force them to understand his pain. Everyone else reminds him too bitterly of the nobility and bravery he once had before that fatal Easter, and how they might have been stronger than he was, or luckier, or smarter, or a thousand other things. These hunters must be dragged down to his level, to be forced into dishonorable death, in the same way-he drowns them, pincers and fin-hands holding them in a specialized compartment of the *Ran* that fills with gallons and gallons of river-water on command.

Unfortunately for everyone, he's right on one particular thing-those who drown and bury in silt, he finds, do indeed rise again, and join his darkling crew.

**Description:** On a first examination, Ben Vold looks human enough, if dirty and neglected; he is fairly tall, with square shoulders, and a tattered captain uniform modified to evoke a



viking outfit. However, upon a closer look, one might notice multiple little things that are off with his appearance: his skin is grayish and way too pale for a human being, with a few signs of decay in some places. His eyes, if stared at for long enough, have slithering pupils, as if something was trying to get out. Similarly, while he dresses and behaves like the ghost viking he pretends to be, people paying attention might notice clues about his true origins: he is familiar with modern technology, in particular the Advanced Armory (if someone tries to throw him an Equalizer Grenade while in Strange Form, he will immediately recognize it and retreat in another part of the *Ran*), his crew fight in a manner very reminiscent of tactics typically used by TFV forces, and he actually wears a TFV badge below his coat.

All pretenses of humanity, however, disappear when Vold merges with his boat. His body warps into a tentacled monstrosity, which spreads all around the *Ran*, fusing to its ground and walls.

**Storyteller Hint:** Ben Vold is a tragic figure, who was turned into the abomination he now is by all the horror he went through while alive. Make no mistake, however, he cannot be cured or redeemed; the good man he once was is gone now, and all that remains is a warped memory of him, twisted by the Darkness and his resentment toward hunters. If confronted with his real identity, he is likely to react violently.

### Profile

Ben Vold possesses the Dread Power Strange Form, meaning his traits might change depending on which form he is using. The numbers in parenthesis are meant to describe his abilities while transformed, while the other numbers represent his abilities in human form.

**Vice:** Envy- as noted above, Ben Vold hates hunters because they remind him of what he lost.

**Virtue:** Dutiful- Vold was a responsible man in his life, even though his ideas of serving the Aesir are little more than delusion, he still takes this task seriously.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2(5), Dexterity 3 (4), Stamina 2(6)

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletic 2, Brawl 3, Drive 3 (the *Ran*), Firearms 2, Survival 2 (Sea)

**Social Skills:** Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2 (Break Spirit), Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Small Unit Tactics, Good Time Management, Fast Reflexes 2, Safe Place 3 (the *Ran*)

**Health:** 7(11)

**Dread Powers (both forms):** Contagion 2, Damnation 3 Dead Flesh 3, Dread Attack 2, Eye for Desire 2, Judgment of Guilt 5, Monster Lord 4, Sense Integrity 1, Strange Form 4, Tempest 3

**Dread Powers (Strange Form only):** Tendrils 3 (Tentacles), Lord of the Manor 5 (Permanent, the *Ran*)

**Potency/Shadows:** 6

**Aspirations:** Recruit more people in his crew, break hunters, defend his boat

**Willpower:** 10

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10 (14)

**Defense:** 5 (6)

**Initiative:** 4 (5)

**Notes:**

- The *Ran* is a modified Houseboat (**Armory p. 146**), with the following modification: Safe Speed and Max Speed cut by half, +3 Durability. For those lacking the book, here's the resulting profile:  
Durability 6, Size 23, Structure 29, Acceleration 2, Safe Speed 12, Max Speed 22, Handling -1, Occupant 1+7.  
On the inside, it counts as a Nest of Size 3 with a Corruption level of 10, with the following Curses: Corruption, Dominance (+3), Resistance (-2), Speed (-2), Willpower (-1), Defense (-1). The Foci is an old lighter in the boiler room, which Vold used to commit his murder-suicide.
- Vold is rarely seen without his crew, which mostly consists of Lurkers, with possibly a few Infiltrators as his most faithful lieutenants. The Storyteller should build them himself, ideally with at least Dead Flesh and Dread Attack, but they can have any other Dread Power; number-wise, they should be between 6 and 12, and should be separated everywhere in the *Ran* rather than in the same place all at once. While in Strange Form, Vold can sacrifice any member of his crew to recover from wounds, healing lethal damages equal to the sacrificed crew member's health boxes. This takes 1 Instant action per crew member.
- While in Strange Form, Ben Vold merges with the *Ran*, becoming a monstrous fusion between a boat and a kraken. In term of game, this means he cannot be killed nor knocked out while in this state unless the boat itself is destroyed; the players can still attack him and inflict him damages, but should they fill his last health box with lethal or Aggravated damages, he will merely use Lord of the Mansion to retreat his "main" body (actually the organic part of him) to a different area of the ship, where he can heal himself by sacrificing crew members. He cannot, however, return to harass the players until his health boxes have been fully healed, giving them some delay to act. If out of crew members, his wounds will heal naturally at the same rate than a human. Should the *Ran* be destroyed or purified, he would die.

Renato Stablum, the Shadow Butcher

*"Yes, scream. Bring them running into my lair. I haven't had enough fun yet."*

The thing that is now called the Shadow Butcher was once born a man by the name of Renato Stablum. Raised by an impoverished single mother, Renato had a shortage of

parental attention. His mother was a firm believer in “spare the rod, spoil the child”, though so she made up for her absence with an abundance of discipline. This only seemed to teach her son to become better at not getting caught torturing the neighborhood animals. Frustrated at his behavior, she sent him off to a local church youth group to “straighten him out”. It ended with both the church and her home going up in flames and Renato living off the streets.

Always bigger than the rest of the kids his age, Renato grew into a giant of a young man. Between that and him already being acclimated to violence, led to him quickly being brought into and rising amongst the local organized criminal element as a thug and enforcer. He developed a reputation amongst his bosses men as utterly ruthless and effective at cowing opposition. Perhaps too well, as Renato picked up a taste for the rush of power that intimidation and murder gave him. Eventually even his peers and superiors grew afraid of him, and tried to hang him out to dry. Pieces of them and their families’ bodies are still turning up washed ashore or found in basements to this day.

Renato began traveling Europe, funding his hobby as a serial killer with jobs as a hitman. All the while, a darkness began to fester in his heart. He ended up dodging Interpol by smuggling himself to the United States. It wasn’t long before his Slasher behavior put him in the sights of VASCU. After a string of bodies, victim and agent alike, he was finally captured and set for trial. Something happened in the transport vehicle, and everyone ended up dead. But, somehow, a monstrous thing looking similar to the Slasher and operating under a similar MO has been spotted again plaguing the shadows. It seems to be preying on Hunters now, and its body count is growing.

**Description:** A monstrous hulking brute with deformed proportions and too-wide, fang-filled grin. Despite its size, it moves with eerie grace and precision. When it speaks, its voice is deceptively quiet before bursting out into an intimidating roar.

**Storyteller Hint:** The Shadow Butcher is a primarily combat threat - it prefers to set up a trap-filled lair, using hit-and-run tactics to goad its foes into entering. It will find choice locations with easy access, and commit enough minor atrocities to turn them into Nests. Then it start fortifying them with traps and torture chambers, kidnapping victims close to its targets to use as bait (and entertainment). If its targets play it cautious, it pits its captives against each other in sadistic games, hoping to corrupt them into other Lurkers or Infiltrators to throw against opponents. If the fight turns against it, it will flee to the nearest Nest and travel elsewhere to recover and plot revenge.

### Profile

The Shadow Butcher is a sadistic, but cunning combat monster. It knows it can’t easily stand against a group itself, so it uses bait, traps, and disposable minions to whittle down opponents until it can kill or capture them.

**Vice:** Sadism - The Shadow Butcher delights in making others suffer.

**Virtue:** Methodical - Renato was thorough in life, and ruthlessly precise even as a Lurker.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 7, Dexterity 6, Stamina 7

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Crafts 3 (Traps), Investigation 1, Occult 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Firearms 3, Larceny 2 (Breaking and Entering), Stealth 4, Survival 1, Weaponry 4

**Social Skills:** Empathy 1, Intimidation 4 (Torture), Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 3, Giant, Cheap Shot 2, Choke Hold 2, Street Fighting 3

**Health:** 13

**Dread Powers:** Poisonous Blood 1, Shadowblade 3, Shadow Walk 2, Chameleon Horror, Home Ground (Nests), Regenerate 3, Surprise Entrance

**Potency/Shadows:** 7

**Aspirations:** Inflict Despair, Murder those who slighted it (and their families), Eat a Princess

**Willpower:** 14

**Size:** 6

**Speed:** 19

**Defense:** 10

**Initiative:** 12

**Story Hooks:**

- There have been a string of disappearances in the area, with strange biblical passages left where the victims were last seen. Before long dark creatures resembling those taken begin to resurface and attack the kidnapped peoples' families and friends. There are rumors that a dark cult and demons are responsible - the real culprit may not be too far off, if less organized.
- An ally among VASCU has asked the Cell for help. Some killer seems to be stalking them and anyone they've been close to. The problem is, it seems just like a criminal who by all evidence ended up dead. Their ally doesn't believe in ghosts, so they want you to shadow their shadower and find out what is going on.

## Story Hooks

### Redeem the Castle

**Summary:** Following a recent team-up with a group of Nobles, the players have set up their new safehouse in a Nest. Using their magic, the Hopeful have made the Corruption temporarily dormant, leaving the place relatively safe. According to them, however, the Nest will eventually awaken again, reverting the place to its nightmarish state... unless it is taken

care of in the meantime. The players have a month (this time is flexible depending on the Storyteller) to put the place to good use and accomplish good actions with it; if they do enough, they should be able to eradicate the corruption and make the safe house their once and for all.

**Setup:** The Princesses were genuine; the players really can purify the Nest if they do enough good with it. This would include things such as helping and saving civilians, arranging peaceful solutions with supernatural creatures who can be reasoned with, offering shelter to the poor, or even showing genuine friendship and camaraderie to each other. Even healthy romance can help. Conversely, things like torture, brutal murder, rape and unhealthy experimentation might reinforce the corruption if they aren't careful. As such, this story hook is primarily a test of the hunters' morality, since it depends on them being at least somewhat good despite all the horrible things they fight everyday. Of course, that's not to say the dormant corruption is all they have to worry about; Infiltrators and Lurkers probably are outside the Safe house, and ready to do anything to recover their home before it's lost to them...

**Tier One:** Beggars can't be choosers. It's likely that the cell stumbled on the area and claimed it because it was abandoned or otherwise unfit, only learning its true nature when they came upon the Nobles. Already ill-equipped, the characters will have to both defend the area from the Darkness and do enough good to redeem the area. The Nobles may be willing to assist, but that will put the characters deeper in their debt. Can the characters keep their claim on the area on their own?

**Tier Two:** Performing good acts requires others to be the recipients of such benevolence, and the characters may be unwilling to reveal themselves just yet. The characters must decide how to redeem the area without exposing the fact that yes, this is a base for people who kill monsters. If the characters decide to use the base as a front to help the mundane population, they'll have to hide their true purpose from the very people they're helping and protect said people from any monsters that come to attack the area. And once they've redeemed the area, can they find a way to shoo out all the people they've been helping, or will their charity lead to ongoing complications for their safe house?

**Tier Three:** At this rank the characters could easily burn down the area and find somewhere else, but their superiors have told them to stay. The higher-ups may doubt the Nobles' claim and seek to discredit them, or believe this to be a chance to better understand the properties of a Nest while it's dormant. The characters have orders to run out the clock, kill (or capture) any monsters lured to the area, and study the area to data that can hopefully be used to discern any changes that occur once the Nobles' magic on the area has faded. At this level, the challenge will be in convincing the Nobles that good is being done (and learning what the Nobles consider to be good) while not actually redeeming the area. Once the Nest reasserts itself, can the characters destroy it without tipping their hand to the Nobles?

### In the Darkness' Grasp

**Summary:** One of the players' loved ones, relatives or contacts has been dragged by Lurkers to the nearby Nest. Either because they want to save someone they care about, or

because the contact has vital information for them, the players are now on a rescue mission to enter the Nest and get the abductee back, hopefully before it's too late...

**Set up:** These abductions actually are a pretty standard practice for Spawns of the Darkness; the people they bring back to the Nest are sequestered, tortured, and actively exposed to the corruption until they get infected. Depending on how much time the players take to get to their relative or contact, he might or might not already be infected and in the process of joining the enemy. Can the hunters still save him? Or will they have to give him a mercy kill before he fully turns into a monster?

**Tier One:** Once the people are freed, the hunters will need to deal with the Nest itself. The Nest is home to local criminal elements, which is how it became a Nest in the first place. They may help kill the Lurkers, but they'll refuse to clean up their act. How the Hunters handle the people tainting the area and clear out the nest will carry repercussions in their entire community.

**Tier Two:** The Nest is an area of some significance, and the tasks of clearing the Nest and rescuing the victims is compounded by a group of rival hunters seeking to claim the area for themselves. A pitched battle between the two groups would likely taint the area even further. Can the characters find a peaceful resolution with the other group, or will they choose to force out the other hunters through violence and take on a strengthened Darkness?

**Tier Three:** Once the victim is rescued, the characters are contacted by their superiors. They're ordered to turn the person (and any other kidnapped people) over. Depending on the group, this may be for treatment, experimentation, or execution. If the characters go along with it, they'll have to find a way to extract everyone involved without attracting the attention of local authorities. If they disagree they'll have to face the consequences of their insubordination, both from other members of the group sent to extract the targets and from the targets themselves should they fall to the darkness.

## Enemy at the City Hall

**Summary:** An Infiltrator has successfully got into a position of power. He is now using his newfound influence to help the Darkness spread, distracting the authorities away from Nests and Dark Cults while turning them against Nobles and Hunters alike. Now it's up to the players to take the twice corrupt politician down, by all means necessary.

**Set up:** A good start for this one is to define what position the Infiltrator was able to acquire. Becoming mayor seems like the most logical option (hence the Story hook's name), but he could also have become a police chief, a high-ranking member of a church, a senator, or any other position where he would have influence. Consider as well if the Infiltrator has any ulterior motives. Does he hope to accomplish something beyond corrupting the entire city?

**Tier One:** The area is relatively small, but it's still home to the characters. To successfully depose the Infiltrator (or to handle the aftermath if they try to simply assassinate them), the characters will have to gain the trust of their local community. And when they succeed, they'll have to work to make sure the replacement has their best interests, or at least the best interests of the community, at heart.

**Tier Two:** The Infiltrator wasn't born in a vacuum. The characters discover that the Infiltrator is but one of a small group of Darkness-infested humans, forming an up-and-coming power base. The characters must find a way to smother this group before it grows in power, and find out how the group came to be in the first place.

**Tier Three:** The Infiltrator isn't intentionally covering for other monsters, but the environment they've created has made it much easier for said monsters to operate. Still, even other monsters are uneasy with having an Infiltrator at the helm. The area gains an undercurrent of intrigue as multiple supernatural groups prepare to wrest control from the Darkness and take it for themselves. It's up to the Hunters to cut through the morass and return control of the area to human hands.

## The Dreamlands

Most Nobles who were willing to talk about their origins insist the Queens they serve rule in a mysterious, alien dimension which they can only access while sleeping, and which they call the Dreamlands. They describe it as a strange land filled with magic and creatures that seem to come right out of Lewis Carroll's imagination. For a long time, hunters, unable to visit such a place, scoffed at these stories. But these last years, with more and more discoveries about dream realms and creatures, these stories have gone through a regain of interest. The Ascending Ones and the Merrick Institute have both started figuring out ways to explore it, and even other Conspiracies like the Cheiron Group and Task Force VALKYRIE have begun exploring this new option.

If you have access to the **Dream** version or the **Vocation** version of **Princess: the Hopeful**, you may use that book's rules on travel to the Dreamlands and what the Dreamlands are like. Otherwise, use these shortened rules below.

## Entering the Dreamlands

Characters who have the Dream Travel Merit and Nobles who are aware of the Dreamlands may enter the Dreamlands when they sleep with a successful roll of Resolve + Composure + Dream Travel (use Inner Light instead of Dream Travel for Nobles). The first time that a character gains the Shadows condition, they subconsciously continue attempting this roll until successful.

## The Dreamlands

The Dreamlands is a strange conglomeration of humanity's shared dreams. Use the rules for Illogical Dream Logic and Rules for the Dream World (**H:tV Tooth and Nail p.10**). The Dreamlands contain areas with some resemblance to settlements or civilizations, populated by beings resembling humans or supernatural beings (mostly Sworn and Nobles). You may build these beings using normal rules and then converting their attributes as per the Dream Form Rules, or using the Brief Nightmares rules (**CofD p.143**). Keep in mind, however, that unlike many other places in the world of Darkness, the inhabitants of the Dreamlands aren't all hostile, and some of them might even prove helpful in the right conditions (though

admittedly, hunters might very well see this as trickery). While some of them will very likely attack a visitor on sight, restrain from doing it all the time if possible unless your players are actively trying to invade the Dreamlands- which admittedly would make for a great Chronicle..

The Dreamlands contain two additional dangers:

### The Wardens

Unfortunately for hunters trying to visit the Dreamlands, the Queens and their subjects are far from being the only creatures living here. In the most hostile regions of this realm, reside strange, enigmatic beings who call themselves Wardens. These creatures usually aren't a danger to most hunters, as they tend to ignore regular humans, even the more supernatural ones like the Lucifuge. What they *do* prey on, however, are those touched by the Light, such as Nobles, Sworn and Beacons, and they have no qualms about using their abilities against mortals who get in the way of their quarries. One should not underestimate the danger they represent however, as they have the ability to manipulate the very fabric of the Dreamlands... including your own memories. While they don't actually *kill* their prey, they are skilled illusionists, capable of trapping your soul in the Dreamlands by crafting a fake reality to convince you this is the real world, and keeping you there until your real body dies from starvation, thus trapping your soul in this strange place...

Wardens are technically Ephemeral beings, but this matters little in the Dreamlands, where *everything* is made of Ephemera, and they practically never leave it, having little reason to do so; should they somehow end up in the physical world, they would be powerless and fade away in a few weeks. Build them using the rules for Ephemeral beings, but ignore the rules for Manifestations, and treat them as permanently Materialized while in the Dreamlands. Should a Warden's Corpus fall to 0, he will die rather than disincorporate.

Wardens have a Rank of 1 to 3, a single Influence on Gales (see below), and get the Mortal Mask Numen for free. To the Storyteller's discretion, they can have access to the Dream Shaping Merit (**Tooth and Nail**, p. 20) with dots equal to their rank, and trade their Numina for additional dots in it.

A Warden's Ban is that they must always try to capture the souls of people touched by the Light. These include Princesses, but also people with the Sworn Endowment or the Beacon Merit; should they meet anyone fitting this list, they *will* try to ensnare their soul; the only exception is when they have multiple targets at once, then they may focus on a single one and let the other go... for now. This doesn't mean they cannot use their powers on other people - they can, and most definitely will if it serves their agenda, as shown with their deal with the Magisters of the Economie, but their priority will always be on beings with a connection to the Light.

Like Spawn of the Darkness, the Warden's Bane is jade, though jade conceived in the Dreamlands has no effect on them; only jade from the physical world works. If your character somehow manages to get jade that was originally from the physical world into the Dreamlands (for example, using Ephemeral Fetish (**Tooth and Nail**, p. 20), they will be



affected by it.



### The Gales:

Every night that a character dreams in the Dreamlands, the Gales of the Dreamlands seek to absorb their dreams into the mass of humanity's dreams. The character must roll Resolve + Composure before waking up. A character may add any form of Supernatural Tolerance other than Inner Light to their roll. Being in the custody of a Warden subtracts the Warden's dots in Dream Shaping or Influence (whichever is higher) from the roll. Failure inflicts one level of the Galemark Condition.

### New Condition: Galemark (Persistent)

The Dreamlands' Gales have marked the character's mind, giving them an intermittent delusion that they are a native to the Dreamlands. Each level in the Condition represents one Galemark. Each Galemark is attached to one of the character's Willpower dots, starting with the leftmost and moving right. When the character spends a point of Willpower from a dot with a Galemark, they temporarily assume the role the Dreamlands have given them, abandoning thoughts of the waking world or their actual life as fictions of no importance. This delusion lasts for the rest of the current scene.

If a character has as many levels in the Galemark Condition as they have Willpower dots the effects become permanent, they no longer gain Galemarks, and the character will not wake without outside intervention. Being faced with proof that their identity is fake is a breaking point for them at a level set by the Storyteller.

**Causes:** Spending time in the Dreamlands.

**Resolution:** After the character has had one full night's sleep without entering the Dreamlands for each level of the Condition, they lose one level, recovering from its baneful effect on their mind. A character who faces proof their memory is false and succeeds at the breaking point also resolves one level of the Condition.

**Beat:** The character abandons an obligation to play her Galemark-created role, or an event or person linked to that role complicates the current situation. The character's player may invent such an event to claim the Beat.

## Chapter 3: The Response

*"As a rule Jayan Kallupurakal did not sweat. She'd kept her professionalism when representing The Cheiron Group against the NHS splashed her face across all the tabloids as the most hated woman in the United Kingdom. When a Voyeur had an emotional breakdown and stormed her office she remained calm and recorded everything that could be admitted in court.*

*But now, as she watched an 11.5 inch plastic woman in a Savile Row suit with matching glasses and briefcase being carried into the courtroom on a designer cushion by a color coordinated paralegal, Jayan's life flashed before her eyes. This wasn't a Mattel brand "Be A*

*Lawyer" Barbie® doll. This was the real Barbie. A gestalt intelligence from humanity's collective unconscious. Sixty years of society's "You Go Girl!" attitudes and a mind that had mastered two hundred careers and counting packed into a pound of plastic.*

*Barbie had gotten legal sharks disbarred, shattered precedents, and redesigned the official bailiff uniform for the Californian legal system. The whole legal world had sighed in relief when she retired to start a medical school for magical pre-teens. And now she was back, and speaking for the defense.*

*At that moment, Jayan really wished she had a doll to comfort her."*

## Compacts

### The Ashwood Abbey

*Henri was bored.*

*It had been several weeks now since he and the others had started this hunt, but to date, nothing of value had happened. John had assured them this teenage girl was a powerful and fight-capable witch, but so far he had yet to see her do such things. And now they were waiting at the entry of this old abandoned house she had just entered for no apparent reason. He really hoped there was no mistake; stalking teenagers was for slashers, not the Abbey.*

*As he was thinking to himself, however, he noticed something glowing from the house. Green flames; the building was burning, and not in a mundane way. He felt his interest coming back; maybe there was something worth his time after all.*

*As he and the others approached the entrance, a girl emerged. She appeared slightly taller than the one who had entered, and was wearing a form-fitting white and green suit with a hood. More interestingly, her eyes and hands were glowing with a similarly green light.*

*"Get the fuck out of my way," she merely said menacingly.*

*Henri cocked his gun, smiling. "Now that's what I'm talking about!"*

Princesses are simultaneously a source of unease and fantasy for the Ashwood Abbey. On one hand, they aren't comfortable with a lot of the implications they raise: much like Prometheans being able to become humans, the fact Nobles are capable of assuming a human form, to look like innocent children and claim to be benevolent beings *really* clashes with the Abbey's idea that monsters are fine to torture, murder and rape due to being inhuman. After all, if one kind of supernatural being has the ability to be good, who's to say the vampires and shapeshifters can't as well? And in that case, how are Ashwood members justified in hunting them?

At the same time, a lot of things about the Hopeful makes members of the Compact dream. After all, what's not to like about women who use magic trinkets to transform into scantily

clad knights and fight nightmarish creatures? Princesses of Mirrors, especially, attract their interest, and the few ones over eighteen are frequently invited to their parties, with many people eager to hang around with them (which typically means snorting cocaine off their body). Princesses of Storms are also heavily looked for, albeit for different reasons: their fiery reputation makes it sound like they would be fun to hunt for young hunters. In general, it's not uncommon for hunters from the Ashwood Abbey to wander close to areas tainted by the Darkness, hoping to find Nobles who would be willing to "play" with them.

What many of them don't know, however, is that the Hopeful are also hunting *them*. Most Nobles loath the Ashwood Abbey; their depraved attitude disgusts them, and the horrible acts they commit during their hunts are likely to create more of the Darkness' taint. In fact, many Princesses are convinced their abbey itself already has plenty of Dark Nests (though in practice, the Hellfire Club is meticulous about cleaning up their club houses after the party; they could hardly have their fun for decades without realizing what creates a Nest). Because of this, Princesses frequently try to oppose the Ashwood Abbey, either sabotaging their parties, destroying their hideouts or just taking part in social events to legally weaken the elder members. Activists leading protests against companies, reporters investigating possible cases of corruption, lawyers pursuing them for sexual harassment all include some Nobles who are trying everything they can to take down the Hellfire Club. There are even rumors of them joining forces with Beasts-- who they usually loathe -- in their shared hatred of the Compact, though that one might be an exaggeration.

### Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** I've got nothing to be ashamed of. Taking on you and your friends could be fun.

**Character Risk Analysis:** Stuffed suits pretending to be Hunters herding the sheep pretending to be people. Pay their bills and keep them off the invite list.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** You bleeding hearts with your gilded cages are no fun. Let them out and we're sure someone will enjoy it. Might even be them.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Stick to your day jobs. No one needs a garbage man who knows tricks, and no one wants a garbage man willing to rob them blind.

**The Light Company:** Losers chauffeur. Real people drive.

**People's Guard:** Security!

**Magisters of the Economie:** There are a million soul-sucking jobs out there. Who the *Hell* do you think you are, trying to make the *Hunt* one of them?!

### The Long Night

Originally, the Long Night adamantly categorized Princesses as witches, and treated them accordingly; however, these last years, especially with the recent spreading of the Radiants, they had to reconsider their stance, and start to acknowledge them as something else

entirely. Ever since, they have been subject to heavy debate among members. The official stand of the Compact is that the Apocalypse is coming, and monsters are the Devil's agents in the last war. But where do the Hopeful fit in this? They are clearly supernatural beings, using powers no human is capable of, much like warlocks. But these powers, according to them, draw from a force of Light and good, and they wish to use them to help and protect mankind rather than prey on it. Where does that leave them?

The opinions are all over the place. Some cells believe the Hopeful are the one exception to the rule, that they are angels sent by God to help humanity during their last battle with the forces of Hell, or virgin souls who received holy powers from him for the same purpose. Others see them as blasphemous witch-whores who wield power stolen from heaven in a vain attempt to redeem their damned souls, or more cunning demons who take the form of angels luring people into following them away from the true path of Jesus; after all, don't they reveal their true, hideous demon forms when you break their pretensions of idealism? Others yet believe these beings really *are* angels, but see them as misguided, manipulated by these mysterious demonic queens from an infernal realm. Not a single cell in the Compact shares the same opinion on them, and confrontations with Nobles tend to be on a case-by-case basis.

One part they all agree on, however, is their stance toward creatures of the Darkness: clearly these things are demons, and possibly the worst of them all: they are the Devil's corruption made flesh, trying to infect and warp what remains of God's creation in a last ditch effort to win the battle. The Darkness is the curse laid on the earth by the fall of Eden, still manifesting to this day. Does this mean the compact should leave it to wreak judgment, or fight it as an aspect of sin? Opinions vary. Of course, an alternate reading is it's not the curse, but the Serpent- that is, Satan. The implications of the adversary manifesting and turning people into monsters are... worrying, to say the least.

## Stereotypes

**#Ammit:** They hunt down those sinful of soul but not those monstrous of flesh. The Devil has led them to be distracted by these smaller iniquities, and we must not allow the same weakness in our own hearts.

**Character Risk Analysis:** They can shepherd a flock against the darkness as well as any preacher, but can the Lord's work truly be done by such secular men?

**Star of Bethlehem:** Beware them, for they may be raising the Antichrist./Teach them to not block the angels of God from their duty but to join them in their glorious war. (Depending on the cell.)

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** A spiritualist sect too rooted in earthly concerns. Let them work until the day comes when they are swept away alongside all the other disbelievers.

**The Light Company:** Whose work are they truly doing?

**People's Guard:** They may appear to be destroying Sodom, but they have no love for the new Jerusalem that awaits.

**Magisters of the Economie:** They would take the Lord's work and make it a den of thieves!

## Loyalists of Thule

The Loyalists do not give much credit to the Nobles' story. They are somewhat skeptical regarding their desire to bring a Utopia to the world; after all, their predecessors made these mistakes themselves once, and it resulted in the Third Reich. Still, to date, the Hopeful haven't proved to be a threat in their eyes, so they aren't particularly hostile to them. At the moment, they are more focused on finding answers: who are these Nobles, and where do they come from?

Exploring the lore at their disposal, some erudites in the compacts have come up with a theory. Princesses' claim to be reincarnations of people who once were part of a powerful kingdom remind them a lot of the stories about Thule, Atlantis and other lost civilizations. Many of them suspect the Kingdom they are referring to might have been this civilization.

Because of this, many Loyalists have tried interviewing Princesses on their previous incarnations and how life was back then, hoping to acquire new, useful lore. While there have been some successes, they are so far rare; most Nobles seem to only have vague memories of their alleged previous lives, and remember them only like a dream. And what they described of the Dreamlands is more reminiscent of a fairy tale than anything else. Despite this, the Compact doesn't give up. Every now and then, they do find a Princess with clearer memory, and willing to share what she knows.

As for the Darkness, well, to put it bluntly, the Loyalists hate them. Lurkers, Infiltrators, Nests- they all need to go. They say this is because of its danger and evil, and that's certainly true. But there is a deeper reason for their hatred-- they are bothered by the implications its corruption raises. The idea that the worst among men might not have committed their crimes alone, then responsibility might lie in the hands of some shadowy alien force rather than the human heart- to the Indebted, it's both psychologically and ideologically horrific. Better to destroy the darkness before people get ideas.

## Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** You seek to redeem your predecessors and fight the same hatreds we do. Don't lose yourself and your mission in the thrill of it.

**Character Risk Analysis:** They understand that a monster's weakness is in its secrets, but they use those secrets to protect monsters all too human.

**Star of Bethlehem:** They have taken on a responsibility and burden not their own and shoulder it admirably.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** They have more strength and knowledge than most would care to admit. Underestimate them at your own risk.

**The Light Company:** Think hard about what you're building, and who you're building it for.

**People's Guard:** Don't you find it curious that you know nothing about the power you hold?

**Magisters of the Economie:** We will find the secrets behind what you're building and bring the whole rotten structure down.

## Network Zero

Ironically enough considering how young they are, Network Zero was one of the first Compacts to figure out the existence of the Hopeful. They started collecting videos and pictures as soon as they noticed recurring stories of "real life superheroes" and girls in weird outfits fighting crime and evil with magic powers. As they collected more and more cases with similarities, they started to notice patterns, and eventually put together these weren't young mages playing vigilante as initially believed, but a different kind of magic user entirely.

However, their reaction has actually been really positive. A lot of people in the Secret Frequency became huge fans of the Radiant, eagerly defending them in internet comments. This came to the Princesses' attention, and eventually, a contact was established; nowadays, the two communicate a lot, with Network Zero frequently providing useful information on the "Darkness" Nobles claim to fight, warning them about their movements whenever asked.

However, for all the collaboration between the two, there is still a point where the two oppose: the Noble's secret identities. For their own safety, the Hopeful avoid divulging their human identity, as this would allow all their enemies to track them down. Unfortunately for them, this is an aspect where Network Zero won't take "no" for an answer; the view counts for a Noble's secret is too tempting, the Frequency's curiosity is too strong, and they are always on the lookout for information regarding this, making them a terrible (if well-meaning) threat. In a slice of hypocrisy, they still try to protect the Princesses at the same time; whenever someone else brings anything that threatens a Noble's secret identity, they will criticize it harshly, even though they usually are the first to upload or watch it.

And regarding the Darkness? Well, as much as they'd hate to admit it, Lurkers are really useful for the Secret Frequency. They're obviously supernatural, leave behind huge amounts of evidence and barely try to hide. Finding one in the area is usually cause to try and get as much footage as possible before someone smashes it.

This, however, leads to another thought- unlike most supernatural creatures, you can make a Lurker. Not with complex rituals or rare cosmic coincidences, but just by hurting people. You can do it by accident. Of course, almost everyone in the compact finds the idea abhorrent...



but the thought keeps coming up in the more extreme fringes. Final and undeniable proof of the supernatural, at the cost of one person's soul. Might that not be worth it?

### Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** They're the new breed of "journalists," the ones who'll tear lives apart for clicks and giggles. Salvage what they know about the supernatural and make real stories out of that.

**Character Risk Analysis:** Start off with the scraps of info they make public and trace them to the real story.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** You have no idea how frustrating it is to see them sitting on a goldmine and doing nothing with it.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** They're so concerned with their day-to-day needs that they won't bother with the bigger picture. Let them clean up the mess so we can do the real work.

**The Light Company:** Here is your proof that people are ready to know.

**People's Guard:** I thought I could get along with them, but then they brought this teen to get beheaded...

**Magisters of the Economie:** They're black holes. Let's shed some light on them.

## Null Mysteriis

Null Mysteriis completely disregards the tales delivered by Princesses of an ancient utopian kingdom ruled by immortal queens; after all, such a civilization surely would have left behind some archeological evidence right? Most of them don't place too much stock in stories about the Dreamlands either. The existence of an "astral plane" accessible by sorcerers and psychics is well documented, but as a realm of dreams and symbology the Null Mysteriis believe evidence sourced from the Dreamlands is as likely to reflect the discoverer's biases as reality. It is anecdotal at best. Still, they cannot deny Princesses do have powers, which are pretty real, despite how out of place they seem. So, how do they explain this?

For the most part, members of the Compact believe that the Hopeful are something similar to the so-called Beasts: poor souls with latent psychic or preternatural potential, who in an effort to understand their abilities delude themselves in fantasies of being fictional characters, shaping their powers in accordance to an easy acceptable mythos. However, while Beasts fashion themselves after monsters and dragons, Nobles chose to reimagine themselves as princesses and knights, heroes who slay monsters and save the day; a common fantasy, and much easier to understand for a child. And since these powers come with a hyper-developed

empathy, making the suffering of others unbearable to them, they become obsessed with playing heroes.

For all these reasons, these “Nobles” should be treated as patients, victims of a mysterious disease, to be studied and helped, but also protected, because despite it all they seem to be doing good. If their powers were understood, could they be replicated?

Other members, on the other hand, believe the power doesn’t actually come from the girls themselves. They have noticed that, whenever they transform, Nobles seem to rely on a small physical object as a trigger for their transformation. This has led them to believe these trinkets might be some form of unknown technology they use as the source of their power, and as such a new opportunity for them, since it could be taken apart, studied, and maybe even reverse engineered. So far, however, this has proved unsuccessful, thanks to the Princesses’ ability to remotely summon these trinkets.

The creatures of Darkness are a bit more complicated to explain however. They could either be unrelated creatures Princesses just happen to target, or maybe another part of their fantasy, subconsciously created by the Princesses -- every hero needs a monster of the week, after all. However, serious studies into the Darkness are running into problems. Not because it defies accepted scientific theories - at this point the scientists of the compact are pretty used to that- but because of the ethical difficulties studying it. Pretty much any serious investigation into the Darkness violates every experimental ethics guideline at best and is outright scientific atrocity at worst. Even leaving a lurker alone while passively observing it makes one guilty by inaction.

Among those members of the compact who know of the Darkness, two sides are forming. One argues they should stick to assisting more combative hunters and writing papers on what tactics work and what powers must be overcome - knowledge isn't worth your humanity. Others say that the need to study this potentially apocalyptic force justifies overriding some normal restraints. The debate is rapidly getting less academic, and if left to grow may soon spill out into the wider compact.

Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** Their handling of the Darkness phenomenon is tangential at best. I don’t see what we can learn from them.

**Character Risk Analysis:** They distort the truth for their own aims, and I’m not convinced that their “niche” isn’t a gimmick they’ve made up for their own benefit.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** At least let us interview those children.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** They help keep things clean, but at the end of the day we’re the ones seeking the higher truths.

**The Light Company:** They’re either just another deluded movement or the vanguard of a massive paradigm shift. Study them closely.

**People's Guard:** Their only use for our knowledge is destruction.

**Magisters of the Economie:** You're either brainwashing people with psychic abilities or you're doing it mundanely. Either way, you're a despicable human being.



The Union

*"You're sure she'll come?"*

*"She always does."*

*Sharon lit her cigarette. "I still hope you know what you're doing, Sheriff. Don't really feel comfortable asking for help from a friggin' witch."*

*"She prefers Noble", Garth answered.*

*"You know what I mean," the deputy answered. "She's got magic powers. She's closer to them than us."*

*"I understand your apprehension about her, but Star Lily never messed with the neighborhood. And she always was very helpful when handling these damn monsters. Trust me, she's clean."*

*Sharon nodded, though it was obvious she was still skeptical. They waited a few more minutes, and finally they saw a light in the sky. Eventually, a young woman with silver hair, in a dark blue dress and a crystal wand, landed in front of the flag they had placed.*

*"Good evening, Sheriff," she told Garth with a smile. "I got your call. Do you need my help?"*

The Union has had a few conflicts with the Twilight Princesses. On several occasions, cults of strange veiled magic users tried to take over their street so they could practice dark rituals bringing nothing but misery and monsters, or vigilante women in green and white wrought havoc in their street trying to hunt these same monsters. They were never welcome, and treated accordingly.

The Radiant learnt from this when they started spreading on the same scale as their Twilight counterparts; nowadays, when they have to operate in Union territory, one of the first things they do is contact the local members and see how they can work with them peacefully. They realize the Union is only dangerous if they feel you are a threat to them, and as such they do their best to have good relations with them; they help with their magic, or with advice on how to fight the Darkness whenever it shows up. In many towns, this has resulted in good partnerships, with the Union and the Hopeful working in concert to make the neighborhood safer. On occasion Radiant and Union cells have disagreed strongly on political issues, but both sides have done a good job of keeping the debate from turning violent.

Unfortunately, this isn't always the case. Some people just don't like having a super-powered vigilante running around on their street, even if said vigilante tries to play by the rules. They don't immediately try to hunt them, obviously -- their resources can be better spent after all-- but they *will* keep an eye on the Nobles in their streets, never really trusting them and preparing to get the weapons should they make a single mistake. After all, nobody can be that good and pure, especially in the supernatural. They have to be up to something...

Overall, relationships between the Union and the Hopeful are fairly cordial, ranging from cautious neutrality to happy collaboration. But every now and then, there are events threatening to disturb this. Most infamously, there are rumors in the midwest of a cell going dark for reasons connected to a Princess: overnight, every hunter and their family suddenly vanished, never to be seen again. The only thing they left behind was a strange note, saying they were fine and would meet their friends in a place called Alhambra...

Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** They're crude sometimes, but you've got to respect their work.

**Character Risk Analysis:** They work for the people who step on the little guy, but at least they know how to expose monsters and open up wallets. Give them some incentive if need be.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** Protecting children is among the best things one can do. But working with those kids? Let's hope you know what you're doing.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Good people doing honest work, but they need to be more active in the community if they don't want things going bad again.

**The Light Company:** We know what it's like to be desperate for a way to put food on the table. But we stuck to our communities that need us. Why should we trust you when you don't do the same?

**People's Guard:** You'd better remember what happened to Robespierre.

**Magisters of the Economie:** They fight monsters for their sakes, not for ours. Don't trust them, and don't let your own near them.



## Conspiracies

### Aegis Kai Doru

Ever since they first manifested millennia ago, the Hopeful have attracted the attention of the Aegis Kai Doru. When first confronted with these young girls wielding strange magic artifacts and magic, they initially presumed these were merely children who had gotten their hands on relics too dangerous for them. This belief was quickly discarded when they found out most of

the Nobles' artifacts disintegrated upon death, making it impossible to recover or catalog them. They eventually came to realize these artifacts had not been merely found by these kids: they were a part of their being.

From there, the conspiracy has been trying for a while to figure out what these beings are. They call them Custodi, and a common theory is that they actually are knights who were granted powers by the ancient monarch of Atlantis in an attempt to protect the ancient city. For this reason, they are frequently believed enemies, even though any Noble who was interrogated on the topic insisted she had no idea what the hunters were talking about, and didn't serve the Mages.

Regardless of the truth, there are three things the Guardians of the Labyrinths do know for sure.. One, not all of their artifacts disintegrate upon death; some can survive them or even exist outside their proximity, albeit disguised as regular objects. Two, these independent artifacts can only be activated and reverted back to their real form by a Noble, or by some particularly nice, optimistic mortals. Three, the Court of Tears possesses these durable artifacts in abundance, making it well worth raiding their harvesting operations. The Aegis Kai Doru still isn't sure why these artifacts respond to optimists, but with the recent growth in the population of Princesses, they have stepped up their attempts to seek and recruit some of them in their ranks.

The Darkness, meanwhile, worries them. It might not be the foe who destroyed the Guardians' ancient paradise, but the Darkness is not a threat to take lightly. Whereas other groups might think of the Darkness as a few Lurkers hanging around the site of a murder or an infiltrator spreading fear and hatred, the Aegis Kai Doru remember the times when the Darkness reached a critical mass and grew exponentially, torturing and murdering entire cities or regions.

If the Aegis Kai Doru think it's likely to happen again they wouldn't hesitate to sterilize an entire region, and they know which Relics could do it.

Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** Ours is a sacred vow and an honored tradition. Yours is a crude campaign confused about who the true enemies are.

**Character Risk Analysis:** Let them cut off a monster's support, then move in for the kill and the spoils.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** If you won't arm yourselves with the powers of the knights you capture, what do you arm yourselves with?

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Just let them fight their war and don't leave your relics unguarded around them.

**The Light Company:** You're more like us than you are like them. We could put their relics to much greater use if you joined us.

**People's Guard:** They burn the relics of Alhambra as if they were waste. Show them their mistakes.

**Magisters of the Economie:** They treat other people the way we treat our relics: as objects to be taken, gathered, and used as they see fit. It's disturbing.

## Ascending Ones

*Shifu was running through the street. He knew the areas like the back of his hands, every corner, every shortcut; usually, it was quite easy for him to escape any pursuer. But something was wrong with this one; no matter where he ran, no matter the obstacles, he seemed to always catch up, climbing and jumping between buildings with an agility that was anything but human.*

*Eventually, as he was about to turn right, the pursuer caught up with him, and, with a ridiculously high jump, landed right in front of him. Shifu had only caught glimpses of him until this moment, but now that he could see him clearly, he was confused; what was standing in front of him was a man in a sleek, dark blue skin-tight suit, with a mask covering his whole face and glowing white eyes.*

*"There's nowhere to run," he said with an amused voice. "Care to listen now?"*

*"What the heck do you want?" Shifu asked. While talking, he sneakily passed his hand through his belt grabbing one of the Elixirs he always kept on him just in case.*

*"Your drug trade," the man in the suit answered. "I want it to end. Now."*

*"Can't do that."*

*"I wasn't asking."*

*"Figured. Look, I know this is bad, but I am not doing it out of greed. I am just trying to serve a greater cause. Money doesn't grow on trees, you know?"*

*"People are suffering because of this. I won't allow it."*

*"I see... then I guess I have no choice." Shifu pulled out the Elixir and promptly drank it. After a short pain, he felt energy going through his veins, invigorating him. Smiling, he took a fighting stance. "Now, bring it on, you vigilante wannabe!"*

Princesses frequently are in conflict with the Ascending Ones. The Jagged Crescent's drug traffic tends to spread misery as a side-effect, which according to the Hopeful allows Darkness to fester further in the world. Because of this, they rarely tolerate the presence of drug dealers from the Cult of the Phoenix, and will work hard to disband their business. They aren't quite as aggressive toward the ones they find hunting monsters, and might even help them, but when it comes to the drugs, they don't have much tolerance.

Ironically enough, the Ascended Ones themselves have very little animosity toward the Hopeful. They aren't sure what these empaths are, but they saw them fight monsters, sometimes including vampires, and with the exception of Twilight Princesses, they rarely



harm humans. As a result, their policy toward the Nobility tends to be rather passive; if they meet a Princess whose goals align with them, they arrange diplomatic encounters and try to make friends. If not, they leave them be and focus on their own business. The Court of Tears, however, is an old foe to the Ascending Ones. Nobles taking advantage of the downtrodden who the Cult of the Phoenix have sworn to protect is nothing new, and the Court of Tears often targets their harvests at places mortal authorities will overlook. Fortunately for the Ascending Ones, shades tend to be extremely hierarchical, so there's usually only one person you need to bribe, bargain with, or assassinate.

The Darkness, on the other hand, frustrates them. Their role as diplomats fail before them- even the smartest Darkspawn refuses to cooperate or bargain except as a prelude to attack, and their presence brings chaos to both mundane and supernatural communities.

The easiest answer is to wipe them out, of course, and most Ascending Ones do just that. After a century or so the Conspiracy stopped bothering to try diplomacy with the Darkness. But one faction has started trying to capture them, in the hope of redeeming them. The infected Condition is quite treatable with alchemy, so perhaps a greater application of the art could do more. If they can take even these monsters and make them good- or at least reasonable- that would be a significant practical and moral accomplishment. If it leads to anything but slaughter on both sides, that is.

#### Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** They claim to be of and fight for our communities, but they have become a people unto themselves and the only voices they hear are their own.

**Character Risk Analysis:** Do not be fooled by their clean hands and pressed suits. Their venom corrodes lives and communities alike, and knives dance around them in wait.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** You hold a blade in one hand and clutch a child in the other. A worthy stance, but is it one you can maintain?

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** They see stains that need to be wiped out where we see weaves that are part of a greater tapestry.

**The Light Company:** The causes you claim seem worthy, but your blind devotion risks disaster.

**People's Guard:** They are no friends of ours.

**Magisters of the Economie:** Your crusade is cruel, and your wealth serves no one but yourselves. You know nothing of ascension.

#### The Cheiron Group

"Standing orders, do not engage under any circumstances." This usually is the first order field agents of the Cheiron Group receive whenever they report having met a Princess. Surprisingly, despite having usually no scruples kidnapping and experimenting on

supernatural creatures, no matter how human they look, TCG seems to have a strict policy of never taking on the Nobles. The exact reason for this is unknown even inside most of the company; the closest there is to an explanation are persisting rumors of a document from the upper echelons, referred to as the “Alhambra Accord”, which dictates hunters of Cheiron do not interfere with any beings matching the Hopeful’s description and modus operandi. Nobody knows why such a document would have been signed, if it even exists in the first place, but members have been instructed to follow it to the letter.

Of course, in practice, they always find loopholes. While TCG never openly engages Princesses, they heavily incite their agents to monitor them; indeed, these beings frequently lead to areas infested by creatures of the Darkness, which *are* acceptable targets. Occasionally, they might recover and bring back a gravely injured, but still alive Princess if the company believes this would go unnoticed (dead Princesses are entirely mundane biologically and quite worthless to the Company). Assets willing to go that far are rare and always valued, though; even the most hardened retrieval agents are uneasy at the thought of kidnapping and bringing back young girls to torture.

As for what the Hopeful themselves bring to the table, the rare cases they can get their hands on samples, the potential applications are limitless- a Princess’ biology incorporates magic directly, after all. Currently, Cheiron scientists are focusing on understanding how their transformative ability functions, and are working on tapping into it for easy cosmetic surgery. An earlier version of this has already been made accessible to some hunters in the form of a Thaumatechnologic implant, granting them a limited form of shapeshifting disguise. This has encouraged them to pursue their effort, hoping to refine the formula and find other beneficial applications.

As for the Darkness, what can be collected about them sadly isn’t very useful. The implants recovered from them are easy to transplant, almost suspiciously so, some of the more paranoid surgeons say. The amounts of power they provide are modest, but with the ease of acquisition and surgery it’s a bargain. However, the people with them tend to go weird. Then murderous. Then their skin falls off and they become knife-monsters. Analysis of the bodies isn’t hugely useful- it seems most of the damage is more metaphysical than physical. Typically, implants from the Darkness are reserved for less valuable agents, the ones the Company doesn’t expect to last long anyway.

Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** Don’t underestimate them. They can tip off our targets at the worst times.

**Character Risk Analysis:** We like them. Not for what they do - we have an in-house team to handle this sort of stuff - but because they soften up monsters and then leave them for us to pick off.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** Get the kids to work for you? Is that possible? More importantly, is that profitable?

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Janitorial is one department, field agents is another. We're not concerned about an outfit so strapped that they have to combine the two.

**The Light Company:** Reliance on handmade is no way to go. We could take you into mass production if you turned over a few of those "Nobles" and the trinkets they make you.

**People's Guard:** Useful idiots who can be funneled away from our lobbies to actual problems.

**Magisters of the Economie:** They dispose of the monsters rather than harvest them. That's no way to run a business. Still, the ones they do keep... we should see if it can be extended to other creatures.

## Lucifuge

Ever since their kind was identified, the Hopeful have been a source of fascination for the Lucifuge. In many ways, they are very similar. Both suddenly awaken at some point in their life with powers; and both are supernatural beings who fight to protect mortals from other creatures of the night, yet are willing to not see all of them as evil. But at the same time, they are complete opposites. The Lucifuge, for all their good intentions, are children of demons; their powers come from an evil place, and part of themselves pushes them toward this evil, even if they struggle against it. Princesses, on the other hand, are literally urged by their own powers to act for good; in fact, their own curse practically is the *reverse*, since failing to protect innocents actually harms them. Many Lucifuge used to feel bitter jealousy toward Nobles for having powers actually not trying to turn them into psychopaths-- until they actually met the unlucky ones, broken by all the horrors they had witnessed and failed to prevent.

Because of all these similarities, the Lucifuge have come to believe the Hopeful are their counterparts: they believe them to be descendants of God's angels, much like they themselves are to the Devil. Based on what they told of their origins, they think these Nephilim, as they call them, once ruled over Humanity in the name of God, until they grew self-righteous and turned on each other, allowing demons to overthrow them. Now they are desperately trying to preserve their Light in a world dominated by beings who want them dead, and for this reason they must be preserved. As such, whenever the Lucifuge finds Nobles, they try their best to befriend and protect them. While they originally had a hard time gaining their trust, in recent years their efforts have paid off, and their relationship with the Hopeful is surprisingly one of the best among hunter organizations, preceded only by Network Zero. In fact, there are even rumors about one of their agents in France who is literally dating a Noble.

Regarding the Darkness, the Lucifuge have a pretty simple opinion: they are sin. Sin leads to hell. Sin enough in one place, and hell draws closer. The Lucifuge know that the cold of the Outer Darkness and the burning fires of the Inferno aren't the same thing of course, but they

recognise peers who feed through spreading sin and misery when they see it. The Darkness must be fought wherever it appears, it's as simple as that.

### Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** Their past is a reminder that even angels can lose their way, and their present is proof that even fallen angels can be redeemed.

**Character Risk Analysis:** For all the good that they have done, their core is rotten with corruption and deceit.

**Star of Bethlehem:** We know where their power comes from, and it is good. Be at peace, and content yourselves with watching over them.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** There is no shame in starting from the muck and working to make things better in spite of that.

**The Light Company:** Take care of them.

**People's Guard:** "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven", but what happens if they succeed?

**Magisters of the Economie:** The angels disappear around them. No good can come of them.

### Malleus Maleficarum

*"This congregation has come to a verdict."*

*Brother Ezekiel took no pleasure in this. No sane man should. She was a child. But she held the powers of Hell within her, no matter how much good she had done with it.*

*"The accused has been found guilty of being a witch!"*

*The Witch screamed behind her gags and thrashed, trying to break her chains. Tears welled up in her eyes as she stared directly at Ezekiel, but his Faith would not waver this day.*

*"Must she die?" David, a new convert to Ezekiel's right, whispered.*

*"The good book says, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.'" He was young- David would learn in time.*

*And then the pyre underneath the witch was lit.*

*Ezekiel offered a prayer to the damned soul of his daughter as the flames engulfed her.*

*"Sister Rachel, what we did to that girl- it wasn't right."*

*"No, it wasn't. Tell me, Brother David, have you considered becoming a part of the Order of Phargos?"*

The Shadow Congregation is a bit at a loss when it comes to how they should handle Nobles. On one hand, many members, especially in the Brotherhood of St. Athanasius, just regard them as witches, who must confess and repent through death like all the others. After all, Mages who believed their powers came from God or Angels never got special treatment,

why should they make an exception now? Every supernatural creature is a spawn of Satan, and should be treated as such.

On the other hand, some members aren't this convinced. It has been noted that many abilities displayed by the Hopeful are actually rather close to Benedictions. Like them, their magic seems fueled by faith, and there are reports of Nobles capable of healing through physical contact and resurrecting somebody who was freshly killed, abilities respectively reminiscent of the Hands of St. Luke and the Boon of Lazarus. Moreover, like the Congregation, they dedicate themselves to fighting monsters and protecting mortals. All of this has led many faithful to suspect these creatures might actually use blessed powers and really serve the will of God.

Some cells here and there in isolated areas, especially the ones from the Order of St Ambrose, have pushed these doubts even further. They actually started believing that, not only might the Hopeful actually get their powers from God, but they might even be true Angels, sent to mankind in its time of misery and fear to bring them hope. These hunters maintain peaceful relationships with their Noble neighbors, and even regularly work together with them to protect humans. Of course, they keep such collaborations a secret as much as possible; should anyone in the higher power learn about this, they would surely face violent ex-communication.

On the surface one would think Creatures from the Darkness are easier to deal with, being little more than demons to send back to Hell. Easy right? Well, no. Most demons, they need to tempt. They manipulate or lie or bribe, but they can't just make you sin. They can possess, yes, but that doesn't stain your soul. Not the Darkness. The Darkness just makes you a worse person, overrides your free will and makes you turn away from God. If some theories about what happens with Lurkers is correct, it might even destroy your soul outright. The idea of the devil being able to do that is horrifying on an almost unimaginable level to the Hammer of Witches.

Naturally, the higher ups write long theological papers explaining why that isn't the case- the victim must have subconsciously listened to the darkness, or only the body was controlled, or the soul goes straight to hell- but even the possibility is devastating to Catholicism. A good reason to kill the whole thing now just in case.

#### Sidebar: The Order of Phargos

One of the lesser-known factions in the Shadow Congregation, the Order of Phargos actually predates them, having formed back in Iran during Antiquity. Believed to have been founded by a man named Phargos, who they named themselves after (and who might have been a Noble himself), this sect believed the Hopeful to be "the Chosen ones", reincarnating among mortals to defend them and fight back against the Darkness. They dedicated themselves to serving and protecting them, hunting Spawns wherever they could find them and purifying

Nests whenever they could. Despite their dangerous lifestyle, the group grew in power, expanding in Asia. When the Malleus Maleficarum came in contact with them, they were impressed by how knowledgeable these people were about the Darkness and ways to hunt them down. After negotiations, the Order agreed to christianize themselves and be integrated in the Congregation, exchanging their skills and knowledge about Spawn-hunting for access to the Church's resources and teaching of Benedictions.

Despite now being officially part of the Malleus Maleficarum, the Order of Phargos hasn't abandoned its beliefs about Princesses, instead adapting them to fit the new canons; they associate them to Saints and Angels, and still actively try to cooperate with them. Obviously, this is seen as heresy by many of the higher ups, especially in the Brotherhood of St. Athanasius, but the Order of St. Ambrose has so far protected them from either execution or excommunication, arguing their expertise is far too precious to be wasted.

#### Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** They serve a false God and show mercy to monsters. They are a mockery of all we believe in.

**Character Risk Analysis:** You expose the sins of others, yes. But tell me, have your benefactors the right to cast the first stone?

**The Star of Bethlehem:** With their compassion, perhaps they will reveal whether these children deserve a chance at conversion or death in the name of God.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Theirs are not the teachings of Christ. Give them the berth you would give to others not of the faith.

**The Light Company:** True peace and serenity comes from service to the one God. You offer only false hope with those you raise to false idols.

**People's Guard:** They would tear down true faith along with false idols. Dangerous, but perhaps their zealotry can be reborn?

**Magisters of the Economie:** Your "good works" are nothing of the sort. Those like you shall never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.



## Merrick Institute

At first, it would seem as if the members of the Merrick Institute and the Hopeful have much in common. Both groups tend to get their abilities as children and teenagers. Both groups exhibit great powers as they travel through dreams. Both groups have dedicated themselves to fighting nightmarish creatures.

And therein lies the problem. The children of the Merrick Institute were promised

high-end educations and promising futures and were instead subjected to imprisonment and torture to awaken their abilities. When they hear a Noble speak of following powerful beings far greater than they, the members of the Merrick Institute are deeply sympathetic - and deeply suspicious. Many believe that the powers behind these “bearers of light” are analogous to their former captors; heartless overseers drafting children into becoming weapons of war for the sake of their own agendas. Nobles who deny these charges are then suggested to be deluding themselves so as to not have to face what’s been done to them and by whom. Of course, such suggestions are not at all well-received among the Hopeful, and many meetings have ended in hurt feelings, harsh words and even violence. The members of the Merrick Institute hold out hope that they can one day free these children as they free their own, but until then the Hopeful are to be regarded as dangerous child soldiers who wield magic and defend their supernatural superiors.

Such divisions have only been widened by Merrick Institute exploration into the Dreamlands. Some members hope that the “settled areas” of the Dreamlands can be a safe haven for those among them unable to wake or a staging ground for attacks on the Primordial Dream, while others plan attacks on what they see as the propaganda facilities brainwashing the Hopeful. As the Queens and those under them begin defending themselves against such intrusions, those in the Merrick Institute are becoming further convinced that those leading the Hopeful are not to be trusted.

Those in the Merrick Institute see the Darkness the way they see other monsters; they’re evil, they cause suffering, and they must be fought when the opportunities are there. The Merrick Institute fights Lurkers and Infiltrators the way they fight other monsters in the physical world; with traps and terrain, diversions and decoys. And when they can’t, they cut their losses and bail. But Nests are different. These areas seem to be tied to their own form of nightmares, and well-prepared dreamers of the Merrick Institute can enter these nightmares and hopefully bring them to an end before the monsters arrive.

#### Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** We can’t afford being as brash as you, but your work can do a lot of good.

**Character Risk Analysis:** Why don’t you pick on someone your own size?

**The Star of Bethlehem:** We appreciate your compassion, but you have to understand. This is as much our fight as it is yours, if not more.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** They do what they can with what they have. They’ll make something of themselves in time.

**The Light Company:** Building like the bottom-up, just like we’re doing. Maybe in time we can work together against those who try to control us.

**The People’s Guard:** We hate abuses of power as much as you do, but you guys go way too far.

**Magisters of the Economie:** Bastards like you are the reason we’re here.



### Sidebar: The Merrick Institute and the Dreamlands

There is a good reason the Merrick Institute was included in this list, despite not being one of the core Compacts or Conspiracies: of all the factions from **Hunter: the Vigil**, they are the most likely to know about, and get involved, with the Dreamlands. After all, they already have access to the Primordial Dream, and their Endowment focuses primarily on fighting in dreams. As such, it only makes sense to grant them rules to deal with this aspect.

A character with access to the Dreamscape Endowment (**Tooth and Nail p.20**) may purchase the three-dot version of the Dream Travel merit for one dot. If the primary actor in The Procedure Tactic has the Dream Travel merit, they can enter the Dreamlands using the Tactic. If The Procedure is performed in a Nest, add the Taint's Corruption to both the Primary and Secondary Dice pools, and the primary actor always awakes in the Nest's Nightscape. Abilities provided by the Dreamscape Endowment can be accessed in the Dreamlands or in a Nest's Nightscape.

### Sidebar: Faction Specialties

**Compacts and Conspiracies** offered free Skill Specialties to Hunters based on what faction of a Compact or Conspiracy they were a part of, and did so. Later books such as **Tooth and Nail** did not. For this reason, the Merrick Institute has no Skill Specialties assigned to its factions. It will be up to the Storyteller and Players to decide if Hunters get free Skill Specialties or not. Skill Specialties will be listed for the groups introduced in this supplement. They will not be listed for the Merrick Institute as the group is not our work; any allocation of Skill Specialties for factions of this group should be a local table discussion.

## Task Force: VALKYRIE

*Lisa landed in the isolated street and pulled out her trinket. A flash of light bathed the area as she reverted back to her mundane form. She had just spent the day successfully damaging the city's drug traffic. Happy with herself, she walked back to her home.*

*However, as she arrived, she quickly realized something wasn't right. Her parents seemed concerned, worried. They asked her to join them in the living room.*

*But she didn't realize how bad the situation was until she saw the men in black suits waiting here, saying they needed to ask her a few questions about something.*

To say VALKYRIE isn't a big fan of the Hopeful would be putting it lightly. From their perspective, Nobles are extra-normal entities who claim allegiance to an alien monarchy from an unknown realm, operating on American Soil in the form of young girls to fight monsters outside the law, without any kind of supervision. At best, they are dangerous vigilantes and terrorists; at worst, they are actively hostile enemy forces trying to overthrow the US Government in favor of their mysterious Queens. Trying to take over through a

democratic election doesn't make any difference; the Constitution states that the president must be born on American soil. The Queens are ineligible and their proxies, even the native-born ones, are unacceptable. Stopping this kind of threat is exactly the reason TFFV was founded in the first place.

However, dealing with them usually proves to be tricky. A good chunk of the Nobles' recruits happen to be child soldiers, making soldiers distinctly less comfortable shooting them than they would be with, let's say, a vampire or a werewolf. Their ability to switch identities and disguise as humans makes them near-impossible to track down: things that should give clues, such as tracking mobile phones that suddenly vanish when its owner transforms, fail before the magic of Dual Identities. There is also a political angle to consider: supernatural creatures or not, no politician wants to see young girls being assassinated. If the VALKYRIE agents responsible are identified as working for Uncle Sam, it's a public relations disaster for the government, and even if they're not, you can bet that the opposition will love to splash a story about "terrorists" killing our children under the incompetent government's nose all over the papers (even if the papers omit the fact it took an entire squad of elite soldiers to bring down one girl). Most monsters avoid social ties and can be disappeared quietly, but when a Princess vanishes, her friends and community start asking questions. Making a Princess' identity public is even worse, as agents frequently find out that, the moment Nobles have their activities exposed and are taken to custody, creatures of the Darkness show up to ruin their homes and murder their very human families. And unlike most extranormal entities that VALKYRIE faces, the Darkness doesn't try to keep its activities beneath public attention.

For all these reasons, TFFV agents are ordered to tread carefully when dealing with one of the Hopeful. Usually, they try to observe and study them. They frequently do everything to find her true identity, more as blackmail material than anything else. Only when the Noble proves a real problem do they open hostilities, first trying to arrest her, and only when this fails do they resort to killing.

Regarding the Darkness, on the other hand, TFFV has little to say. Sure, they are dangerous monsters, and must be eliminated wherever they are found; but that's nothing really new on the block. Lurkers usually are pretty simple to deal with: they cause trouble, kill them, boom. Job done. Or at least, that's what they say. In truth, there is a real problem when humans start to get exposed to the corrupting influence of Nests. It is a well known fact among high rank agents that people in power - politicians, businessmen, generals - have been infected by this insidious power. Some suspect there might even be a few Infiltrators among them. TFFV knows exactly who they are, as well as how integral they are to the power structure of the nation. Taking care of such problems is of course TFFV's founding purpose, but it must be done with the highest secrecy; such information, if revealed, would be deeply damaging to the USA's authority, so the grunts don't need to know. As long as they think the Darkness is just monsters they can shoot, that's great. Another devil dealt with by TFFV.

Stereotypes:

**#Ammit:** Mostly they're not worth our time.

**Character Risk Analysis:** Their battlefield is as vital as ours. Godspeed and good luck.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** You really think you can assimilate them into our society? Well then, you try that and call us if things go south.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Quit your Robin Hood crap and work your way up like everyone else.

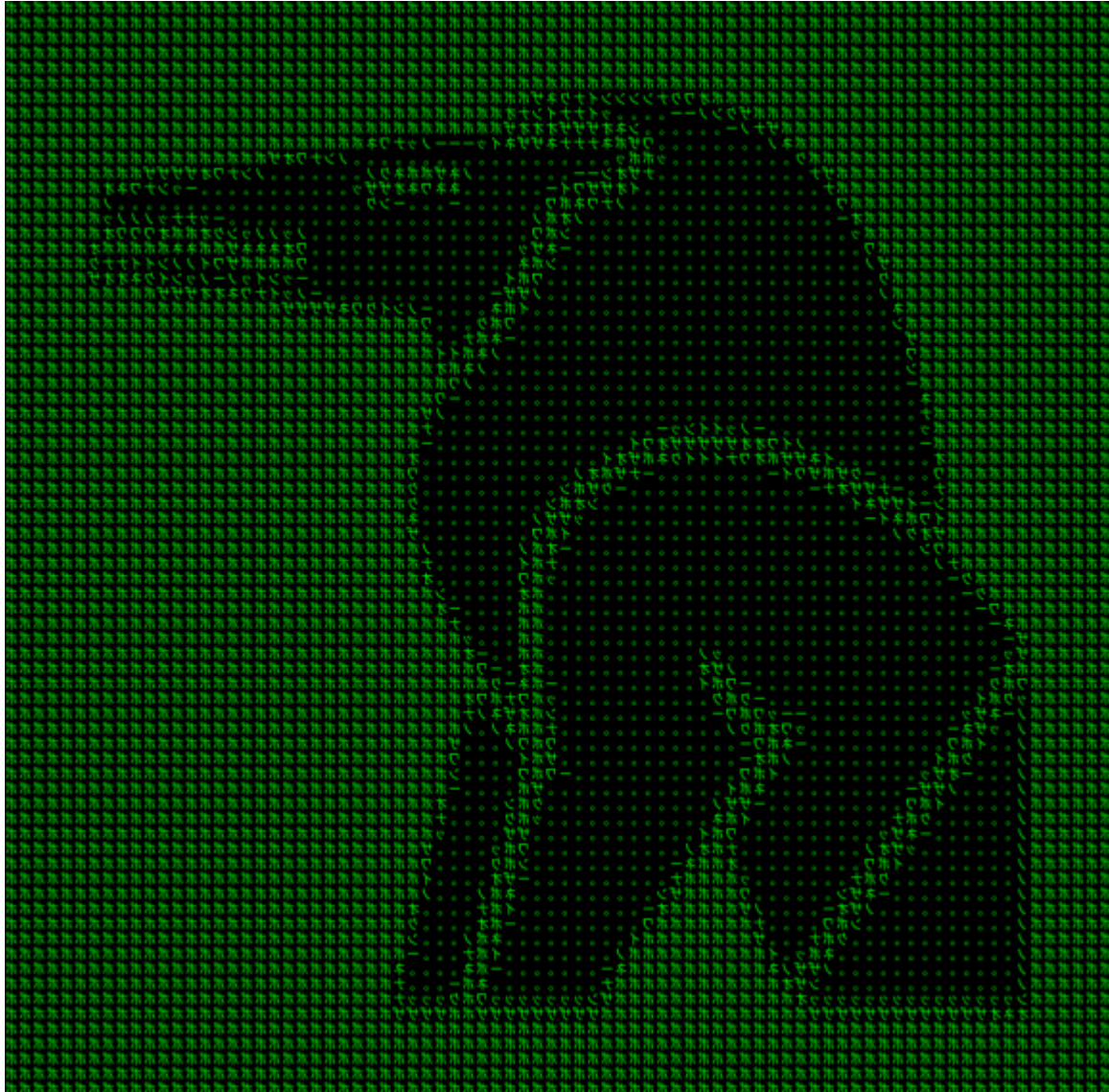
**The Light Company:** A Fifth Column in the making. Don't let them spread.

**The People's Guard:** Anarcho-Communists who fight monsters are still Anarcho-Communists. Let them engage, destroy all the hostiles in the clean-up, then blame the hostiles for the casualties.

**Magisters of the Economie:** Leave the mundanes alone and we'll talk.

## New Compacts

### #Ammit: *The Hacktivists*



Despite having started out as a Berserker Cell, #Ammit is unique in that its members refrain from the direct action that characterizes the Furies. Sure, they *do* hate the Darkness, and want to tear apart every single instance of Corruption they can find. But their approach to doing so is subtle and indirect, if no less furious.

Once, they were the same as any of the other servants of the Queen of Storms. What turned them from a normal group of Queen-touched berserk into a functioning Compact, was realizing how much collateral damage they were inflicting. According to the stories, their

original members actually grew so hate-filled that they ended up accusing each other of collaboration and descending into civil war. This made the survivors, who were still sane enough not to participate in pointless self-destruction, realize what they had become.

In the process of backing away from the rage and violence that nearly destroyed them they decided a change of tactics was in order: to really kill the Darkness, you needed to *starve* it. Thus, what was once a terrorist cell became a hacktivist group. Their leader, a man named Nigel Fox, was a passionate Egyptophile, and so he named #Ammit after the monster from Egyptian Mythology who eats the hearts of the wicked.

Thus #Ammit's mission became twofold. To fight the Darkness, and to bind unfettered rage to their mission. The once-small band of former Berserkers has grown considerably by recruiting from the downtrodden, the disaffected, and the just plain angry. This has created a diverse compact spread across all portions of society, united only in their mission to destroy the "Children of Apophis" and a knowledge of where their own rage can lead if left unchecked. This diversity is reflected in their namesake, the hippo-lion-crocodile chimera who served at Anubis' feet.

*"Of course I still hate them. They deserve to die, and they will. But rage is worthless when blind; all it does is reinforce them. We have to channel it in the right direction."*

## The Enemy

Much like the Devourer of the Dead herself, #Ammit don't really think of themselves as judges, but as executioners of those deemed by others to be evil, to have been already found "dead inside". They just make that death total so the "Children of Apophis" cannot pollute the world anymore. And they're very serious about this. The Compact states that their link to the Queen of Storms makes their judgment suspect, and so #Ammit rely on external sources to pick their targets. These sources can include judges, news organizations, activists, or even other Hunter Compacts. Exactly who should pick #Ammit's targets is constant controversy, with Hunters accusing their peers of choosing sources that validate their own bias. But this policy remains the key to #Ammit putting their past as Berserkers behind them, and the Compact takes it very seriously, as several incarcerated would-be recruits can attest. #Ammit has a complicated relationship with the murkier parts of the internet. As followers of the Queen of Storms, they venerate hate, but their past has given them little tolerance for occasions when that hatred hits the wrong target.

Once you're a target the gloves come off and the inner Seraphim come out, #Ammit doesn't just want to stop you, they want to *break* you. #Ammit rarely tries to destroy Nests themselves, as they fear that path will lead them back into the Berserkers' fold. Instead they target people whose actions have contributed, continue to contribute, and will contribute to the Corruption in the future. Exactly who qualifies can be unpredictable, as they do not pick

their own targets, but #Ammit's membership means they often follow "anubi" who focus on those who hurt minorities and other vulnerable groups. Being a target of #Ammit can be terrifying. To make sure their punishment is effective and an example to any other would be Apophite, they find everything there is to their target and they slowly, methodically undo everything about them, drag them down, publicize the slow destruction, and with any luck scare other potential Apophites back onto the straight and narrow. Once they've decided someone is an Apophite, it takes a lot of effort to calm their rage. As far as they're concerned an Apophite is already dead, their heart has already been weighed against a feather and found wanting. It is far too late to plead your case or make amends.

"This heart is something the world knows is heavy", they say. "We are the flooding Nile. Heavy things sink."

Ironically, this also means they're relatively pacifist when it comes to monsters. Most potential Anubi won't publicly denounce a monster; and other hunter groups #Ammit might have a habit of not leaving anything for them to target. The Compact look up to most Princesses in general, even if they have to suppress a snort at how naive many of them are. The Radiant, for the most part, are equally derisive; on the streets or on the net, to them, a follower of Storms is a follower of Storms. Nobody knows how much words can hurt more than the hyper-empathetic.

## Hunters

You're like the Hulk: always angry at something. So you were a perfect Stormite for so long. But then that explosion happened. You were trapped under the rubble with the cold, bloody evidence of the consequences of your actions surrounding you for three days before you were finally found. And that's what it took you to see where Storms had led you. Now you sneak into buildings to grab evidence instead of family members and plant bugs instead of bombs. The rage is still there, you just hope you've figured out how to focus it.

You thought that being part of the hacker gang was a good way to piss people off who nobody really minded upsetting. Eventually, Nigel caught on to the fact that 30% of the potential Apophite files you were offering were meant purely to annoy him. But when you explained your reasoning behind joining #Ammit, he didn't kick you out. Rather, he bought you a flight to LA, and showed you the conquered base of a Dark cult called the Sodality of the Harpuiai, who he told you were why he didn't allow the self-righteous kind of troll in. After reading their records (and you had to take a few stomach pills), you agreed with the policy. You're still more about pranks than justice, but you are more mythical trickster than IT malcontent, now - you have a method beyond mere amusement.

You were falsely accused of heinous crimes. Even after you called in some favors and had some "friends" get the charges dropped and your name cleared, you received death threats and harassment from self-righteous net crusaders. You thought your life was over,

ruined, by people you'd never met and who wouldn't even give you the benefit of the doubt. Then #Ammit dispensed its own justice on your persecutors. They believed you were still innocent. Now you are doing what you can to pay them back. Even if it means talking to your friends in the... less than fully human circles.

## Divisions

**Research** is in charge of finding Apophites and validating suspected targets. They carefully study each person reported, and separate the ones who really deserve their attention from the wrongly accused ones. This is one of the most important jobs in the Compact, as they ensure no innocent victim has to suffer the Devourer's wrath.

*Free Specialty:* Empathy (Motives)

**Outreach** is responsible for forming alliances and looking for potential associates that might be beneficial to the group. This mostly entails other hacktivist groups, but also other hunter organizations, and sometimes even supernatural beings. #Ammit doesn't discriminate in their quest for allies.

*Free Specialty:* Socialize (Hacktivist groups)

**Onsite** are the more personally capable hunters, either physically or socially, depending on the member. They provide muscle and in-person social engineering, whenever one of these two things are needed.

*Free Specialty:* Computer (Online Harassment) (Optionally, see **Hurt Locker**, p. 60 for further details.) or Persuasion (Social Engineering)

## System

### Status

#Ammit Status is less about increasing initiation and more like a very specialized Fame Merit; it's gained by, when it comes down to it, showing off your Mad Skillz (tm) in a competently spectacular manner. Humiliating and discrediting an Apophite by publishing how he cheated on his wife? Good. Revealing said information via a music video/sex tape replacing the gallery of memories at the wedding anniversary, and the mistress is wearing a costume that blatantly resembles the Apophite's biological sister? Much better. Videotape all of that and then show the reaction anonymously to the board of directors thinking about buying his company from him, derailing the deal and ensuring his bankruptcy? The question is not whether they'll trip over themselves buying you drinks. The question is, given how gender-and-sexuality-open #Ammit prides itself on being, "When you said 'have my babies', how many of you were being serious?"

- You've convinced the moderators that you believe in the cause and you hate the Darkness as much as they do. As a sign of their faith in you, they've taught you some of their tricks

when it comes to hacking, and put you in contact with a couple of your more experienced peers. You get the Hobbyist Clique Merit, focusing on Computers or Crafts.

••• "We are the flood" is the motto of #Ammit, and someone at this level of trust, authority, andchutzpah knows how to irrigate it. You gain the Sekhmet's Roar Tactic free of charge, or have your Experience refunded if you already know it. Furthermore, you are enlisted as a moderator of the groups' many forums, and your authority gives you a lot of sway among not only #Ammit, but gray hat and shadowy subcultures in general. You gain two dots to distribute among Allies (Hacktivists), and Allies (Occultists) but you can only apply these to enlisting help for anti-Apophite operations. #Ammit is honorable like that, and dishonorable people don't last long.

•••• Maybe it's some lingering wisp of the Purifying Storm guiding them, maybe it's simple experience combined with the not-small amount of occult lore they retain, but a true rock star among #Ammit's merry band has a knack for finding more...special sympathizers with the cause. You gain three dots worth of Contacts, with each dot representing a type of Supernatural being. These Contacts can provide information on who among them is a personal enemy of a particular Child of Apophis as per the normal Contacts rules. While said entity is unlikely to be the end-all be-all of the hunt, they invariably have powers that make them very useful surprises and alternative ways of getting useful information that social engineering and research can't do on its own. Of course, the aid of the shadowy world does not come free, and it's likely that they'll ask a commiserate favor of their own. But, that's hardly the worst sacrifice an administrator has made at this point.

### Stereotypes:

**Ashwood Abbey:** Murderous freaks who'll try anything. That's much easier to blackmail, but also that much more dangerous.

**Network Zero:** Possibly the best source of information we can hope for. These guys know where to find the Darkness, and they are willing to share it.

**The Loyalists of Thule:** They're good people trying to set things right, but they need more confidence in themselves.

**Habibti Ma:** They free people who get caught by creeps and charlatans. Help them do their job, then pick the leaders apart.

**Character Risk Analysis:** They expose Apophites to protect the Apophites they're shielding. Convenient as Hell. Save them for last.

**Star of Bethlehem:** A bunch of cowards afraid their little angels will get hurt. Why don't you take away their consoles too, while you're at it? There might be violent video games!

**Sanitary Workers Collective:** We're sorry if those Apophites were your meal ticket, but we still have to bring them down. You'll just have to deal. / What would they "clean" if they had the resources? I won't trust them until I can trust their answer to that.

**The Light Company:** We learned to make a difference on our own. So can you.

**The People's Guard:** These guys are case in point on why uncontrolled rage and hate are bad.



**The Magisters of the Economie:** Hey, what do you throw a drowning Magister? Another Magister!

## Character Risk Analysis: *The Suits*

*Evelyn was looking over the trainee's freshly-started dossier. She had been called in to assist once the full nature of the assignment was made clear.*

*"Wait a minute," Said Smith. "You're saying that if we confirm that she's a..." He paused, feeling foolish.*

*"Say it," Evelyn snapped. "Don't let them use that awkwardness against you."*

*"A magical girl," He finished. "If we confirm she's a magical girl, you're saying that means her concerns about the workers are invalid?"*

*"No, just that her acting on those concerns is. Even if she's not, we've been paid to get her to back down. But if she is, the gloves come off."*

*Smith laughed darkly, "So much for protecting the workers."*

*Evelyn stared straight into his eyes. "That's exactly what we're doing. Power corrupts. And they're power. They're rotten with it, sometimes literally. Say we let her maintain leadership of those workers. What's to stop her from exploiting them the same way? What's to protect the workers from her pulling knives or claws out of nowhere the first time one of them doesn't go along with her?"*

*"The law?" Smith asked, wanting to see the response.*

*Evelyn didn't give one.*

*Smith thought. "But then, the law hasn't protected them so far."*

*Evelyn nodded, "Exactly." She saw the sweat starting to bead on his forehead.*

*"You're getting it. This isn't a fair fight. The people who work here long enough have all seen what they can do. Not just magical girls, but the whole menagerie. Two months ago, I saw one of them use their magic to make a person shoot themselves in the head."*

*"And I'm supposed to stop them... how?" Smith asked.*

*"By remembering that no man is an island, and no monster either. Even monsters have ties to humanity. They have to find ways to support themselves, to fit in, to maintain dignity. Some even want relations with people, on their own terms, of course. But they have weaknesses. Secrets, failures, there are so many ways to cut those ties one by one. Do that, and they'll either realize their power play isn't worth it or..."*

*Evelyn handed Smith a newspaper. His eyes flicked over to a circled news story that began, "Winston Jones was found dead this morning in his apartment. Police are reporting that the man hung himself after losing..."*

*"Don't lose yourself to mercy." Evelyn warned. "And don't forget that your client is on trial right now. The court of public opinion has a death row all its own. We can't protect everyone, but we can do our best to protect those who have placed their trust in us."*

*“Or die trying,” Smith shrugged. “But that’s no reason to back down.” He looked over the dossier. “You know, I’m seeing a major class differential between her and the workers. I think we could use that to start driving a wedge between them.”*

*Evelyn replied, “You might be right. Let’s see what we can do.”*

It’s a popular opinion among those aware of the supernatural, especially conspiracy theorists, that monsters are responsible for all the corruption in the world. This is in no way true. Humans are just as capable of scheming and manipulating as any creature of the night, and sometimes, the local rich man abusing his power over the neighborhood really isn’t a Vampire Prince or a Beast Tyrant, but just a mere mortal. Obviously, this places them in a dangerous situation; wealthy and influential people are likely to be targeted by supernatural creatures who see them as obstacles to their goals, pawns to be used, or a threat to what they defend. And while having a lot of money and political power comes in handy among humans, it isn’t worth much when your opponents can brainwash you, compel people to act against you, or otherwise use their powers to go around all your protections. To put it bluntly, supernaturals can “cheat”; they think themselves above the law, above human systems. And in these situations, people need someone to stand up for them. This philosophy was what motivated the creation of Character Risk Analysis.

The organization started fairly modestly as a small PR consulting firm that had trouble even functioning due to a severe lack of clients. However, everything changed when an unusual one presented himself to them. The man, a famous politician, insisted he was harassed by a vigilante woman who, according to him, had “magical powers”. Because of how crazy it sounded, no one so far had been willing to take the job. But Character Risk Analysis had little to lose, so they accepted.

Much to their surprise, the woman turned out to indeed be a supernatural being; to be specific, she had the power to transform into a super-powered version of herself. She also was harassing their client for a reason: the man was a slumlord of sorts, overcharging the tenants in her neighborhood for substandard housing, and she was hoping to force him to improve the situation. While they could sympathize with her motivations, there was no denying what she was doing was illegal harassment. Moreover, history showed that destroying their client’s operation would probably leave a power vacuum that would be filled by something or someone even worse. So the Firm did their job, and worked to take the woman down. They wouldn’t kill her, obviously, but they didn’t need to; all they had to do was turn public opinion against her, and confront her with how unrealistic her expectations were. Eventually, she was forced to back down and abandon her crusade, while the client paid the firm handsomely for a job well-done.

What they didn’t expect, however, was that this wouldn’t be the last time they would be asked to do this. The man was influential, and he spread the word about them. Soon, they

received many calls from others among the rich and powerful who had similar problems with supernatural beings trying to undermine their business. They kept taking the jobs, and their reputation grew. The once small firm started flourishing, becoming progressively more efficient in the process.

Nowadays, Character Risk Analysis has made a business out of helping rich (and often corrupt) humans with supernatural protesters, muckrakers and infiltrators. They engage in charity and goodwill coordination, employee investigations, PR campaigns, smear campaigns, truth burying - anything that might give them an edge against the things they deal with. On the surface, they are just a regular PR firm like many others - but any rich or influential person knows who to call for when they have a "special" kind of problem.

## The Enemy

As a rule, Character Risk Analysis is a reactive organization; if a monster isn't causing their clients problems, it's not their problem either. For this reason Character Risk Analysis tends to clash with Nobility the most, as they are the ones most likely to engage in public advocacy and protest. Still, CRA's clientele tends to attract supernatural opposition of all kinds. Environmentally-conscious werewolves, vampires who want corporate pawns, even Beasts who see the powerful as prey. These are just among the most common problems the people of Character Risk Analysis have to handle.

To the people of Character Risk Analysis, it's not simply that the monsters are opposed to the goals of their clients, or even that the clients will pay them handsomely for their expertise. Once driven solely by profit, the suits behind CRA have seen what monsters will do to carry out their agendas and hardened their hearts. Humans may be corrupt and exploitative - the powerful ones almost always are - but at least they pay lip service to the fact that their power is built on their social, legal, and reciprocal relations to other people in a system people maintain or end of their own free will. Monsters don't care; they get what they want through inhuman charisma, mental domination, and supernatural force and sabotage. Even the "good ones" will break the rules for their "greater good," caring nothing for the disruptions their so-called crusades bring forth. Nothing good will ever come from allowing the supernatural to topple (or worse, supplant) the people in power that CRA defend, and so Character Risk Analysis uses their skills and understanding of human society to blunt the advantages such creatures possess and send them a message; play by the rules, leave us alone, or you'll regret it. If and when a monster does back off, Character Risk Analysis usually does the same. They know that other hunters often come to finish off the monsters made pariahs while the public has their back turned, and welcome it as the natural result of a "level playing field."

It's not common, but Character Risk Analysis does occasionally learn that the activists they've been hired to handle are completely human. They don't pull back completely when this happens - they have a job to do, and many a human activist still has skeletons in their closet - but they are a lot less willing to bend the law against them, especially as regulators who shy away from anything with a touch of the occult will gladly take a closer look when there's only mortals involved. In theory, an activist group could hire them to go against a company led by monsters. In practice, it's far more likely for CRA to be hired by the more mundane members of the organization seeking cover and a justifiable reason to purge the supernatural elements from their power structure.

#### Sidebar: Character Risk Analysis and the Darkness

The higher-ups in Character Risk Analysis are very aware that Nests and Infiltrators often crop up around their clients. The internal line is that such things are caused by insidious exploitation or manipulation of their clients by an external supernatural force. Still, it happens frequently enough that CRA has a standard operating procedure for both cases.

With Nests, CRA agents find an outside source to blame, citing "urban decay" or "moral decay" or some other decay that isn't those of their clientele. Then those who have the firm on retainer take the opportunity to raze and repurpose the land; developers build high-end apartment complexes, or governments have parks or other "community resources" constructed. Character Risk Analysis often has their clients support these projects even when the Corruption isn't their direct fault, as such construction makes for good photo-ops, tax write offs, and the occasional kickback between firm and government.

As for Infiltrators, they're supernatural beings in places of power, and Character Risk Analysis remains an enemy of the supernatural in positions of power that could hinder their clients (and they've learned that working for Infiltrators can become very bad PR very fast). As such, Infiltrators often end up "driven to suicide," after which point Character Risk Analysis goes after their client's opponents, blaming the death on their "harassment campaigns."

#### Hunters

You were working for a company whose morale was plummeting. You exposed the creature that was bringing everyone to blows just by being there and convinced the boss to fire them. Your gut told you that the employee was going to go postal, and your advice saved the lives of several company employees. Character Risk Analysis hired you after that, and now you work to root out the darkness when it tries to infest an organization from the inside.

The mass march tonight is full of brainwashed victims; you can see it in their eyes. The march isn't even against your clients specifically; the local bloodsuckers just want to

send a message that this is their turf. But your clients have paid Character Risk Analysis as a matter of principle and pride. When the riot happens, your clients will announce their support for the police and pay for the cleanup the next morning so that the masses will know who to support. And there will be a riot; if the vampires don't start it, the instigators you've embedded into the march will.

You can't prove that the group who stole the details of your client's business deals are the same ones leading the protests against his mayoral campaign, but you know they have to be at least connected. Your client's business deals aren't your problem; the ones trying to bring him down are. Their names and addresses are in folders in your office, and you're filling in those folders bit by bit. You have the report card one of them is hiding from their parents. The medical records of another will make for an easy abuse investigation against the parents, even if it won't stick. And you have enough to tie one to an apartment complex arson. These protests are going to ruin people, but your candidate won't be one of them.

You've been on this assignment for weeks. The group against animal testing has been stepping up their tactics against the company you were sent to help. Slashed tires, shattered cages, and the maulings local police have attributed to "wild animals." You know who is really behind it all, and you've referred your clients to people who know what silver does to them. With your help, they'll be caught tonight, and the company will be free to continue their experiments in peace.

## Departments

**Liaisons** help companies put their best face forward. They consult with clients and coordinate opportunities to demonstrate goodwill and spin the latest issues. They seek to present their clients as the reasonable, considerate side opposed by irrational, angry mobs, and will gladly manipulate people and footage to feed such perceptions. When worst comes to worst, they act as middlemen, referring clients to people willing to take a more hands-on approach to their supernatural problem.

*Free Specialty:* Expression (Press Conferences)

**Auditors** are hired to investigate morale issues and espionage in an organization. Although they find their share of mundane troublemakers, their real talent lies in exposing the supernatural manipulation of corporate bureaucracy and the hearts and minds that run it, rooting out the source and discovering their agenda.

*Free Specialty:* Politics (Corporations)

**Opposition Research** seeks to destroy those stoking ire or disruption against their clients. They are private investigators, records sifters, and interviewers. They find the

skeletons in the closets of those against them and use the knowledge to intimidate people into silence or punish the persistent by exposing their misdeeds. Some falsify evidence, framing and discrediting would-be organizers.

*Free Specialty:* Larceny (Document forgery) or Socialize (The Odd One Out) (See **Hurt Locker**, p. 68)

## Systems

### Status

Gaining status in Character Risk Analysis comes from successfully defending your clients. CRA employees can gain the following benefits.

- You understand that you'll have to steel your mind to defeat the schemes of the supernatural. You gain access to the Devil's Advocate Endowment.
- You have a sympathetic ear willing to spread your message. Gain two dots divided among Allies or Contacts in groups such as The Media, Bloggers, or Law Enforcement.
- You know who to talk to when you need someone ruined. Once per chapter, your character may procure a service with Availability •• or lower [CofD 278-279] without cost if such a service is part of one's efforts against a member of the supernatural.

## Lines in the Sand

The following are suggested Code modifications for members of Character Risk Analysis:

- Replace "Causing a person to suffer a breaking point from exposure to the supernatural" with "Knowing someone who has close personal ties to a monstrous enemy of your client and not attempting to sever the relationship."
- Replace "Learning that a monster harmed a person when you could have done something to stop it but didn't" with "Fail to stop a monster from replacing or removing a client from their position of power."
- Replace "Betraying a fellow hunter" with "Betraying a member or a client of Character Risk Analysis."

### Stereotypes:

**Ashwood Abbey:** If you can understand what Ashwood Abbey thinks of the supernatural, you can understand what the supernatural thinks of people. Nominally on the side of humanity, Abbey members are too high-risk for all but our most experienced staff, but the rewards for success are substantial.

**The Union:** Labor unions can't create a mass protest with a single speech, but they can still cause their employers trouble. If you can convince their employers to toss the community a few bones and remind them who the real enemies are, it makes our job a lot easier.

**The Barrett Commission:** They're loyal customers to us, as we are to them. A respectable model for anyone trying to battle the supernatural in upper-class scenarios.

**Yuri's Group:** They support the little guys like we support the big ones. The sob stories they get from low-level employees and collateral damage can be valuable assets in our jobs.

**The Office of the Lord Stewards:** Opening a London branch was something that had to be done. The Office assumes that monsters can act in good faith, and mandates that monsters and humans engage in what they call fair negotiation. When someone doesn't trust the Stewards to fight for their fair share, they come for us for the leverage they need. Still, the Office has made bargains and allies that we can't hope to match yet, so play their game by their rules until we have the leverage to help pry their whole rotten system apart.

**#Ammit:** When we say that you'd have to be living in a cave to think that monsters might not be guilty, these are the people we're talking about.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** And they call *us* the Devil's advocates.

**Sanitation Workers Committee:** We'd hire you if we could trust you to be honest. But if you're going to victimize our clients, we'll expose you for the criminals you are and turn you over to the justice system.

**The Light Company:** You want to help humanity? Work with the real deal. Working for them will just make you moths to the flame.

**The People's Guard:** Stick to deposing monsters and we won't have a problem.

**The Magisters of the Economie:** Their mundane operations are unmatched in retaking and rebuilding monster-infested neighborhoods, but we have to do more to keep their leaders from succumbing to the power of the "idealists" that make them no better.

*"The supernaturals may have their own courts, but the court of public opinion belongs to mankind. When the monsters want to play judge, jury, and executioner, let us be your advocates."*

### The Light Company: *the Mercenaries*

*The creature rushed on Julian, snapping its monstrous jaws at him. Dodging the bite at the last minute, the man slashed at its neck; the Spawn's horrible head fell off, rolling a few meters away. With their leader dead, the other beasts hesitated, allowing his comrades to finish them off with a few well-placed shots. Julian sighed in relief as his glowing sword reverted to the form of an ordinary machete.*

*With all the creatures dead, the Princess turned in his direction. She seemed to have been injured as well in the fight, albeit not to the same degree; a few cuts and bruises were visible on her face and knees, and chunks of her dress had been torn apart by the monsters' teeth.*

*"Are they all dead?" she asked.*

*Julian nodded. "We already took care of the ones in the basement before joining you here. My men are taking control of the Nest as we speak."*

*A radiant smile appeared on the Noble's bruised face. "Thank you so much." she said. "I couldn't have done it without you."*

*"It was an honor, my lady. I trust you have our payment, though?"*

*"Of course. Just give me a moment..." she grabbed her purse, eventually pulling a small book out. "Here it is. I had a hard time crafting it, but it was worth all the effort."*

*"Is it the one we asked for?" Julian politely asked.*

*"Yes. That should be all you need to purify a "Nest", as you call these. I trust you will use it well."*

*"Indeed we will," the captain answered with a smile. "Pleasure doing business with you, my lady."*

*He saluted her, promptly imitated by all his men.*

Under medieval law, the common folk owed their lord a term of military service. But when peace returned not all would return to toil upon the fields. Former soldiers would band together and form free companies, free for they owed allegiance to no lord, and elect a captain to negotiate with the nobles on their behalf. In good company commoners and peasants could rise above their station and find fame and fortune.

Originally the Light Company was a support group for Sworn who had parted from their Princess. They would share stories of the good times, console each other over grief, trade gossip about what the Nobility were up to, and most importantly offer tips about which Princesses might be looking for a new retainer.

It was several successes in this last task that led to the group's name spreading among the Noble adjacent community in Italy. Ordinary mortals began to join the group, hoping that they too might become Sworn and wield this power with their own two hands.

The 2008 financial crash changed the group's nature entirely, and formalized its existence as The Light Company. As the economy and job market folded like a house of cards, a generation gave up on the broken promise of a university education followed by a middle class life with a bit more wealth than their parents. As many people turned to new political parties offering radical changes and grand promises, others with some knowledge of the supernatural, turned to Princesses offering radical changes and grand promises and to the groups they thought could give them a shortcut into the Noble World.

## The Contract

Anyone can apply to work at a charitable foundation run by a Princess but if you want to reach the top; to wield magic or help shape policies that could define the kingdom to come, maybe even get into a scrap or two with the forces of evil. That's harder. Most Nobles are superhumanly charismatic and can recruit from the best, and that's when they recruit on the open job market. When you listen to your heart, it often tells you to select someone you love dearly as your Sworn retainer.



That's where the Light Company comes in. The Company promises its members to put them in the right place at the right time to meet a Princess who needs their skills there and then. Newer members are given simpler contracts and are expected to ask for Wisps in return. These Wisps are given to higher Status members who either use them for administrative tasks (a blessing or two makes it so much easier to predict where the Company will next be needed) or to take on tougher contracts and bring back a new Bequest or a promise to elevate one of the Company into the ranks of the Sworn.

On the surface this might make the Company look like a pyramid scheme with a Sworn elite supported by ranks of desperate youth hoping to escape a crumbling job market by rising towards Nobility; but in truth mobility is high. Experienced members (and lucky beginners) are constantly being recruited away to become a Princess', and many join the Company in the express hope that they will be chosen. From the Company's perspective this means they can offer a realistic promise of advancement to all members who perform well (which for mere mortals working alongside the supernatural is far from guaranteed) without worrying about how they will all be kept supplied with Wisps and Bequests.

The contracts the Light Company takes on tend to be specialized. There are Sworn in the Company with enough experience to outdo an inexperienced Princess, but once a Noble comes into the fullness of her magic a Sworn cannot keep up. The Company's bread and butter is taking jobs that a Princess cannot do herself, either because she needs to be elsewhere or because the task is specialized and she hasn't taken the time to learn it.

And when a Princess asks a Hunter why he won't work for free, in the name of goodness and light... well, that's all part of the challenge you face in the Company. Members are expected to hold their ground in the face of a Noble's superhuman charisma while still being diplomatic enough to seal the deal and preserve the Company's good name. Those who succeed rise in Status and reap the rewards.

## Hunters

Your lady was one of the first to Blossom after the release and you served at her side for many years before she fell in battle, which means you're experienced enough to be more competent than some of the Princesses you contract with. You don't think anyone can replace your lady in your heart, but honoring her name every time you serve alongside her peers is the next best thing.

You were always a Princess fanboy ever since you learned about them on the Secret Frequency. Most people tell you it's nonsense - your parents included - but you know better. And with the economy in tatters there wasn't anything more productive for you to do with your time than comment on Secret Frequency Youtube videos until the day your parents threatened to kick you out the house. With the few contacts you had, you learned about a group said to be close to the Princess and found your way in. Working with the Light

Company doesn't pay, but it keeps your parents off your back and in the end you've got to do what you love.

The plan is simple. Serve the company. Become Sworn. Earn the right Bequest, super intelligence perhaps, and then return to civilian life. They say the job market is in trouble, that the middle class is shrinking, but you know that you just need to think outside the box. And no matter how many monsters you have to face, no matter how many injuries you take in battle, you will earn the good life.

With time Princesses grow up, they fall in love, have children, and if their partner isn't around they'll need a sitter when they go out fighting evil. That's where you come in, you're great with children, and as a Sworn you can control whatever magical defenses your employer has built into the family home.

For as long as you remembered you hated yourself. You weren't pretty, you weren't popular, your only talent was pretending to be someone better than you. And who would you rather pretend to be than those magical girls you saw in popular media? Then you heard someone speak and your heart felt the same flutter it felt when you watched those magical girls. First chance you got, you started looking for a way to get closer to her. You discovered there's a lot of people who can make your heart flutter, and you found a group who can put you in contact. Now you serve someone who can really see something good in you, and when she sees it you can see it too.

When your daughter was chosen by the Light to be a champion of humanity, you did the only thing a responsible parent could do: Fight alongside her. It's not like sending a magical powerhouse to her room would stop her going out. But in the end your worst fears came true, she died in battle and you lived on. Afterwards you joined the company because they could give you the tools to fight on, and every monster you face is one somebody else's little daughter doesn't have to.

You grew up in Alhambra and were trained to be a lady's maid. You couldn't believe your luck when your lady turned out to be not some Alhambran noble, but a genuine Noble. Being asked to spy on her for the Queen was conflicting but you don't think she noticed, and when she asked you to stay with her, how could you say no to a genuine Princess? Life in the provinces was uncomfortably bright, noisy, and confusing but you bore it for your lady. Then she died, and when you had a chance to return to your nice safe home you realized you don't want to. You don't understand this world, all you know how to be is a lady's maid. So you'd best find a new lady.

[Picture: A young Italian man. He wears a long coat with his left arm outside the sleeve

(think Auron from Final Fantasy X). He holds a Roman gladius in his right hand and rests it on his shoulder. A bottle of wine hangs from his belt, and you can see an animesque print of a magical girl on his shirt.]

I offer my service to she who is worthy of being served.

## Standards

The Light Company seeks employment from women endowed with superhuman skills and magical powers. To win a contract they must offer something special, to fill a unique role that a Princess won't be able to handle herself.

**The Bell and the Band** specialize in covering for or supporting a Noble's mundane identity. Anyone can write a history essay for a Princess out hunting monsters, not anyone can fake her handwriting, knowledge, and opinions when called at the eleventh hour. Fewer still could attend a family dinner while under a magical disguise without arousing suspicion. As these services usually require a Princess to disclose information about her mundane existence to a paid contractor this requires an *incredible* amount of trust; even with an offer to erase all memories upon completion of the job. Proving yourself trustworthy is as important as proving yourself competent, but the intimacy of these tasks mean that while The Bell and the Band have the hardest time finding employment, they have the easiest time becoming permanent retainers.

Free Specialty: Subterfuge (Mimicry)

Those who march under **The Three Towers** are experts in the secret wars of Light and Darkness. There is no shortage of Princesses who can inspire and organize a militia; there is also no shortage of Princesses who travel from Nest to Nest fighting the Darkness personally and when one of these Nobles stumbles upon a swarm of Lurkers poised to descend upon civilians The Three Towers tries to be right there, ready and waiting to offer their skills in strategy, logistics, and civilian management as well as a steady hand upon a rifle.

Free Specialty: Academics (Military strategy) or Persuasion (Leadership)

Behind **The Lion and the Nail** are experienced political operators. Negotiators who get things done while their masters are busy shaking hands and winning votes, bean counters who keep the ship pointed forward no matter who's in office. Even the most charismatic Princess can't do anything if she's tied up by commitments in her mundane life or has more commitments than hours in the day, so having someone to speak on your behalf or hold the fort at the office can be a valuable asset.

Free Specialty: Persuasion (Negotiations) or Expression (Public Statements)

**The Chevron and the Chalice** are the internal affairs and leadership of the Company. They provide the other Standards with leads on where their talents might be needed, that's the easy part. The hard part is digging up those leads. Members scour through news and follow grapevines to keep abreast of the latest developments in the Princess community, and there's even careful use of magical mirrors involved.

Free Specialty: Investigation (Princesses)

### Sidebar: Bequest Trading

While the ability to earn that magical ability you've wanted is part of the reason people join, most Bequests used by The Light Company belong to the company itself rather than individual members. Sworn members return Bequests at the end of the job and are given appropriate tools at the start of a job. At the start of a Session players can trade in Bequest(s) for new Bequest(s) providing the total number of Merit dots remains the same. Characters who lose these Bequests may have the dots replaced as per sanctity of Merits, but may lose access to Bequests unless they can provide justification. Characters who misuse Bequests provided by the Light Company are likely to lose both their access to Bequests and their role within the company; relevant dots lost this way may be replaced as per Sanctity of Merits.

The Company's stockpile of Bequests is not limitless, and they have little access to Twilight Charms. However resource limitations should only come into play when they add appropriate drama or challenge to the game.

### Status

Among the rank and file status in The Light Company is earned by successfully acquiring and completing contracts with the Nobility and bringing the Company back its cut of the spoils. At the very top status instead is awarded for leadership in the group; helping others find contracts or simply managing the Company's assets competently can earn those final two dots.

- The Company promises its members advancement and opportunity above all, and so all beginners are given a one Dot Mentor.
- You've given your all to the Company and the Nobility and have earned an opportunity to become Sworn. You may swear to any Radiant Court and take two Dots in the Sworn Merit. If you're already a Sworn you get a two dot discount on a Bequest of your choice.
- By now you must have had an opportunity to become a Noble's personal servant and chosen to remain with the Company itself. This loyalty has not gone unnoticed, and since the Company cannot reward you with becoming Sworn or by helping you find a lady to serve, it

can reward you with a plum leadership position instead. And also a Dot in Contacts with Princesses and the Fixer Merit.

### Lines in the Sand

The following are suggested Code Modifications for the Light Company:

- An exception for Nobility.
- Replace "Refusing aid to a fellow hunter in need," with "Breaking a contract with a Noble."
- Replace "Learning that a monster harmed a person when you could have done something to stop it but didn't," with "Learning that a person was harmed by using a magical item you could have instructed them on."
- Replace "Gaining or bestowing power from an obviously monstrous source" with "Betraying a Noble in the pursuit of personal gain."

### Stereotypes:

**Agnis Kai Doru:** It's not about what you wield. It's about who you wield it for.

**Task Force: Valkyrie:** You serve a constitution because your founding fathers believed no one person could be trusted with power. They were wrong.

**#Ammit:** You can dress it up however you like. I recognise which Queen you serve.

**Character Risk Analysis:** We both serve many masters. But I am paid with something greater than coin.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** Your daughter is older and wiser than you by centuries and you're trying to ground her?

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Things have gotten so much better in the last century, how can you be so cynical about the future?

**The People's Guard:** There is more to human relationships than power and exploitation. There can be mutual benefit or even love in service.

**The Magisters of the Economie:** I may have no liege lady, but I still have my honor and will not take employment with the likes of you!

### The Star of Bethlehem: *The Caretakers*

Imagine you're a parent. And your young daughter, she starts talking about how she has superpowers and fights monsters. You shrug it off as playing. Then her school work begins to suffer and she starts sneaking out to hang around these strange people and she starts to show signs of stress. You assume bullying, maybe, or depression. Until her body turns up torn apart. A wild animal, they say, but you remember how fervent she was that she really was fighting monsters.

This story, and many similar ones, was what motivated the creation of the group known as the Star of Bethlehem. After suffering similar cases of their children dying in mysterious circumstances while claiming to fight monsters, many grieving parents started looking on the internet, and meeting each other here. Some always knew something was up, some only saw it when it was pointed out. It always was the same pattern: the child started off enthusiastic, then were getting grimmer, then they vanished or died.

Eventually these many parents found some of them whose children had not vanished yet. Trying to avoid similar tragedies, they investigated these children, and eventually learnt the truth- the magic powers were real. The monsters were real. And so were the Queens. They gave the children magic items and sent them to fight monsters. And the children, being unwitting child soldiers, died.

Based on what they discovered, these “Queens”, ancient beings of unknown origins, claim they are doing this in an effort to protect humanity, and possibly create a utopia. It’s unknown if they genuinely believe that or if it’s a front for some nefarious purpose, but frankly, the parents don’t care. These creatures are brainwashing children, sending them to fight terrible things, and moving on the next child once they are done. Maybe they do think they’re doing the right thing, but the world is full of people who commit atrocities in the name of the right thing.

Deciding to protect their kids, the parents started to get together and form a group, sharing everything they could. Some had money. Some had connections. Some had combat skills, organizational experience, or even knowledge of the occult. Together, they formed a society dedicated to a single and simple purpose: stopping the Queens from creating more child soldiers and victims.

## The Enemy

Compared to most Compacts, the Star of Bethlehem stands out as a bit unique, in that they don’t see the Nobles as monsters to hunt, zealots to stop, or even uneasy allies; they perceive them as children, plain and simple, who are being manipulated by a higher power and in need of rescue. They don’t blame the adult “princesses” for this - they have been brainwashed since they were children. Nor do they blame the Lurkers - if someone pushes a child into an alligator pit, you don’t make the alligator responsible for what obviously happens. No, it’s the Queens who are responsible for this whole thing. And with the support of over a hundred grieving parents now, they will take down these Queens before they can recruit one more child into their private army.

While the group primarily focuses on the Queens, they will occasionally fight other creatures; after all, there are plenty of monsters who prey on children, be it vampires and shapeshifters with specific tastes in victims, Beasts who like to “teach” from youth, witches who use unholy

ingredients for their ritual, mad scientists looking for easy test subjects, and obviously Lurkers who actively hunt children. Members also are recruited among anyone who lost or almost lost a child to the supernatural, no matter the source. But as far as they know, most of these monsters are individual horrors; the Queens are the organized ones, the ones who brainwash and manipulate children on a large scale, and because of this they are the Foundation's main focus.

The Star also engages in mundane efforts to protect children. Their members work to assist and intervene in cases of abducted children, child trafficking, or child abuse, they support children identification and tracking projects, and some teach children how to defend themselves (in a socially acceptable and non-proactive way, of course). But even these mundane efforts occasionally take on a supernatural bent, as members seek to find children abducted by the Fae or intervene when Union families are teaching their children to fight and kill monsters.

## Hunters

You went to specialist after specialist to see why your child was acting so strangely. None of them found anything wrong, and you were about to accept it when the last specialist plunged a dagger into what you thought was your child's gut. You screamed, and screamed louder when the thing burst into red feathers and twigs. They told you that your child had been captured and may never be found again, and introduced you to others who had lost their children. Now you work to find other lost children, and you pray that one day you will see your own again.

They always get in over their heads, you think. You've seen too many Sensitives fall to hordes of monsters they thought they could beat alone. You don't have magic, but you have a loaded gun, a tank of gasoline, and a unit you can count on. You know he resents you leaving him out of it. You can see it when he heals the wounds your group gets each time. You both know you'll probably die before he does. But for you, it's worth it.

You know the kid. They weren't born; you were there when they were created so that another monster could "earn" their humanity. Now they have to live with the consequences. They're cursed to wander the earth forever lest the world and its people turn against them. But the distance protects you both, and they call from time to time. Your words keep him going, and their courage keeps you going. But you know that they'll have to create a monster of their own one day, and you don't know what you'll do when that day comes.

## Factions

**The Polaris Foundation** takes its name and mission from the North Star. They are made up of parents and other adults who work to find children and guide them home (or if home is not safe, to a suitable shelter or halfway house). They attempt to steer the power of

the Sensitives to nonviolent applications. The Polaris Foundation includes child psychologists and social workers who help children who have gone through traumatic experiences and do their best to convince those who would battle the supernatural to not throw their lives away. Their public (and often mundane) efforts make them the face of the organization.

*Free Specialty:* Empathy (Nobility)

**Millstones** take their name from the biblical quote, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea." These members are the ones who battle the supernatural in the children's stead, and they are the ones leading the campaigns against those conscripting the Sensitives. Millstones rarely deal with children themselves, as those who fight aren't always the kindest souls. It gets awkward when a Sensitive asks why someone weaker is allowed to fight monsters but not them, and it gets even more awkward when a small but growing number of Millstones agree, suggesting that the Sensitives be allowed back into the fight under their supervision and support as opposed to being strung along by the Queens.

*Free Specialty:* Occult (The Darkness) or Occult (The Queens)

## Systems

### Status

Both of the factions who work for the Star of Bethlehem rise in the ranks by defending children, albeit in their own ways. Members gain the following benefits:

- New members quickly learn the focus of the Star of Bethlehem is protecting children and the resources that already exist for that purpose. You get one dot in Contacts in a group related to children such as law enforcement, pediatric medicine, or social services.
- Polaris Foundation members at this rank have their own haven for wayward children. Millstones have a place to stay when they're not fighting monsters. You get or add two dots in the Safe Place Merit.
- Leaders of the Star of Bethlehem prepare for the organization's true task - saving Sensitives from the ones manipulating them. You gain the Dream Travel Merit.

### Lines in the Sand

The following are suggested Code Modifications for the Star of Bethlehem

- An Exception for supernatural children.
- Replace "Refusing aid to a fellow hunter in need" with "Refusing aid to a child in need."
- Replace "Putting the well-being or autonomy of a monster over that of a person" with "Showing mercy to one who has deliberately exploited or abused a child."
- Replace "Gaining or bestowing power from an obviously monstrous source" with "Allowing a monstrous power from any source to harm a child (this includes allowing a supernatural child



to harm themselves or cause themselves to be harmed from use of their supernatural abilities).”

#### Stereotypes:

**Malleus Maleficarum:** Catholics who commit the Massacre of the Innocents. Point them anywhere else, just keep them away from the children.

**Merrick Institute:** They’ve gone through the same Hell that Sensitives have, and unlike them, they realize the evil of those who gave them their “gifts.” We tell them to give up their war against the beasts of nightmare and their former captors and hope they’ll listen, but until then we’ll protect them as best we can.

**Network Zero:** Every year the people risking their lives to catch the supernatural on tape are getting younger. Pageviews are not worth dying for.

**Talbot Group:** They have invaluable experience dealing with more violent children, but their suspicions that our Sensitives are possessed makes close cooperation impossible.

**Searchlight:** Don’t think of them as kindred spirits. No matter how well they hide it, their loss broke them, and now, they’re a danger to everyone, including themselves.

**#Ammit:** As well-intentioned as it is, this kind of activism attracts idealistic youths who soon find themselves in over their heads. We warn our wards to stay away from it.

**Character Risk Analysis:** Their clients have donated to our causes. If only they knew the cruelty their so-called advocates inflict on our Sensitives.

**The People’s Guard:** Don’t believe their lies. You should never be ashamed of who you are.

**Sanitation Workers Collective:** Their work saves lives, and that makes them worthy of our respect.

**The Light Company:** They protect the Sensitives, but also support the Sensitives in fighting. Still, we think they can be cooperated with.

**The Magisters of the Economie:** There aren’t words to describe them. Well there are, but they can’t be used around children.

*“No child should have to fight for a home to live in and a guardian to watch over them. These are things they deserve for simply being born.”*

## New Conspiracies

### Sanitation Workers Collective: *The Cleansers*

When the French Revolution turned into the reign of terror, it was the idealists and ideologues who felt the sting of the guillotine. The People’s Guard denounced the new tyrants and for that their heads began to roll. Some fled East to continue their legacy, but this is the story of those who fled North to the British isles.

Revolution was an old word to the English. Over a century before the English had deposed their king, their tyrant who followed, and restored the monarchy. Now the English were preparing for a second revolution, an industrial revolution, but this time parliament, not monarchs ruled. Reform was the word, not revolution, and the guardsmen found fellow cause with working class groups like the Chartist reformists and Luddite trade protectionists.

Though far from quick or clean, the memory of the guillotine hung over the guard tempered revolutionary zeal and the slow but lasting successes of reform gave the members a taste for victory. The guard attached itself to abolitionist movements and spread internationally, and it was there, so far west that west became east that the guard became something more.

In Japan, Shinto teaches that moral and physical cleanliness are intertwined, and those who did the necessary jobs of creating that cleanliness were seen as impure and cast down for their troubles. The Guard saw fellow travelers among these *burakumin*. As Hunters met their contemporaries they encountered a secretive folk-Shinto practiced by the Hunters protecting the lowest in Japanese society. A folk faith that turned prejudices on their head and exalted the burakumin because they alone created cleanliness and purity.

An alliance was formed, ideas were exchanged, and something amazing happened. The combination of Japanese theology, western ideas of class struggle, and magical lore looted from the Court of Tears all those decades ago combined to create the powers of Cleansings. The discovery of a new Endowment naturally had an enormous effect on the Hunters who witnessed it and the two groups celebrated the product of their alliance by merging into a single international Conspiracy. The English name for the new group was to be the Sanitation Workers Collective.

And then life, as it always does, went on. When immigrants from Asia arrived to work on the railroads the Collective stood ready to welcome and protect their cousins. In the plantations of the American South, agents of the collective met in secret with slaves to teach them how to survive while in Washington and London no abolitionist petition reached the government without the collective's signatures. The sheer horrors of slavery fueled a radical fire in the Collective and for the first time since they first fled France the word "revolution" was whispered, but in the end they settled for infiltrating the staff of pro-slavery politicians and destroying their careers.

Though a day of rejoicing, the abolition of slavery did not mark an end to the Collective's mission. The members were far from surprised when they saw that even as free men African Americans were still an underclass struggling to survive. As it had for decades, the job continued.

The Sanitation Workers Collective remain an underclass within the underclass, fighting the Darkness and using their meager positions in the houses and offices of the wealthy and influential to manipulate policy and prevent the Darkness from gaining new footholds where the poorest are exploited. They know that they could take their secrets and their skills and escape to a life of quiet luxury, but they will not leave their people behind. Upholding the vigil costs them much, but they will suffer that cost; they've suffered everything else.

## The Enemy

For most members of the Sanitation Workers Collective the goal is simple, survive. Poverty has enough dangers and struggles, add monsters to the mix and it can take everything a Sanitation Worker has just to keep fed, warm, and uninjured. The Collective teaches its members the skills to fight or hide until their shift is over and they can return home to relative safety. And when the danger is close to home or the job lasts too long to hide, the Collective teaches its members to fight back.

Some members who have a little more breathing room (often thanks to the Collective's support) try to tackle the problem at the source. A Vampire or Beast who preys upon the people. A Witch whose hubris lets escaped experiments prey upon the population. An Infiltrator in city hall or even a purely mortal mayor whose policies are bringing hardship to the poor. Members of the Collective don't discriminate in their targets; anyone who is a threat is watched, lest one day the group can spare the resources to depose them. And if Nests and Spawn are watched most of all, it's because all the other predators stepping on the little guy have a way of creating Nests in their wake.

The Conspiracy's feelings on the Nobility are mixed, based on their history with the Nobles they interacted with before the release. Shades are loathed as the embodiment of a cruel and predatory feudal master that they are, and vigorously opposed whenever their outposts appear close enough to present a danger. Furies are even worse, when their campaigns leave a trail of human bodies you can guess which class those bodies belong to. Idols are figures of disgust, not enmity, because they are usually only a threat to people foolish enough to follow them and the Collective know better than that.

Many of the new Nobles have distanced themselves from these bad apples and the Collective have worked for enough masters to know how the Radiant are different from your run of the mill silver-spooned CEO. But they also know how the Radiant are the same. They are still incarnations of privilege and aristocracy whose magic can enhance their lives while the Collective try to survive on the Nobility's table scraps; and Nobles possess the power to hide their identity and escape danger in a way the Collective's protectees never can. For all their merits and flaws, Princesses are a class apart from the Collective, and the Collective has looked after their own for too long to retire and leave it to their so-called "betters". They'll work with the Nobles. They'll even work for them - a paycheck is a paycheck, and the power of being Sworn can be a literal lifesaver - but what they will not do is rely on a Princess (or a rich mortal) to take care of them. Any member who does will find their friends growing distant if their actions come to light.

## Hunters

When the police seize a property, be it a drug den or a murderer's home, your firm has the contract to clean it up before it's back on the market. The city won't pay extra to deal with monsters that they claim don't exist, and the boss won't cut you any slack. You don't want to fight monsters, but your children need to eat.

You work in child services. You could live with being overworked and understaffed, but when you have to dodge between Spawn to rescue an Infected child from an abusive home, that's when the government doesn't have your back, and the Sanitation Workers Collective does. But even that is nothing compared to the times you see abuse hidden behind an army of lawyers; that's when you call upon every trick they've taught you and take matters into your own hands.

Sometimes the job is janitor, sometimes it's handyman, one time it was hygiene coordination engineer. But you like to keep it simple, you clean things and you're good with electrics. And you work in a crew. Connor can make evidence disappear like a magician. Sameer is a genius at computers, even if he can't hack office politics. Tracy looks like another janitor, but with the right body language and a low cut top the rest of you turn invisible. In your time you've worked for, and cracked open, corporate towers, banks, and government facilities. You could be millionaires, but the job isn't about money. It's about justice.

When romance novelists write about the dashing latin lover they are talking about you. You could have been a supermodel, but that requires citizenship or a green card. Instead you're a pool boy, and you know exactly which housewives on your route are neglected by their workaholic executive husbands, and exactly how to coax out incriminating secrets when they vent about their frustrations in your arms.

Your community is starving in a land of plenty, and so much of it is wasted. Not just food, although the waste in food alone is criminal and you take what you can. You see gold, jewelry, hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of valuables locked up in the form of tiny trinkets that only see the light of day a few times a year. And you know they earned that on the backs of people like you. A single ring would make the difference between a colleague paying their medical bills and continuing the fight and a colleague disabled and languishing. Time to get to work.

[Picture: A haggard looking hispanic maid is mopping up the blood leaking from a dead Spawn's body. A pistol hangs at her hip]

*"The 'little guys' aren't so little anymore, are we?"*

## Jobs

Most members belong to **Sanitation**. Through no fault of their own they are forced to work in dangerous conditions. Often these are Nests, but such areas could also be a vampire's hunting ground, a drug dealer's turf, or the home of a respectable pillar of society with depraved tastes and enough money to avoid any uncomfortable questions. Sanitation are taught how to survive the dangers they face, and how to eradicate the Nests where they work. For some the Vigil provides a source of spiritual fulfillment in a life that offers little material rewards. For others it's an unwanted burden, but one they cannot escape.

Free Specialty: Stealth (Nests)

When the elite create Nests and oppress the poor they rarely get their own hands or their own homes dirty. Working and serving their employers directly means that **Housekeepers** are also distant from the Nests and other consequences of their masters' actions but they too can serve the Conspiracy. With the right application of charm and guile, and a coffee tray, a maid could talk her way into a closed door meeting. Or with a smile and the right words she could carry a laptop full of incriminating evidence "to the shop for repairs". Housekeepers work closely with the elite, and they use that to acquire information, transfer funds, and occasionally "clean up" somebody who's been causing too much trouble.

Free Specialty: Socialize (Upper Class) or Subterfuge (Appearing Insignificant)

When a silver tongue won't do, **The Night Shift** takes the more direct approach. They'll disable the alarms, crack open the safe, and make off with the documents detailing illicit business deals, or the valuables they fence to support their campaign against the Darkness. And the guards? They know the guards; sometimes they *are* the guards. The elite have always had the poorer parts of society do their dirty work, so they have only themselves to blame when the Night Shift comes to clean them out.

Free Specialty: Larceny (Houses) or Larceny (Corporate Offices).

## Status

Status in the Sanitation Workers Collective comes from helping your fellow members. This means that someone struggling to survive honestly will have a much harder time rising in status than someone who has the freedom to travel and hunt on the Conspiracy's behalf, or the ruthlessness to take what the Collective needs from the higher class. It's an irony not lost on its members, but then they've always been used to living under inequality and fighting on whatever scraps are available to them.

- When everything seemed to be at its Darkest, the Sanitation Workers Collective was there with an offer. You've been inducted into the Conspiracy and gain access to Cleansing rites.

... You're middle management in the Conspiracy. You travel between the Cells, making sure everyone has what they need to survive and know what the Conspiracy needs from them. Sometimes you hunt alongside the Cell you're working with, but mostly you use the Fixer Merit to deal with things on the Cell's behalf.

.... You don't exist, and you haven't existed for a long time to anyone but your information network. On paper your safehouse is an empty property owned by a legitimate and respected company. Or maybe you're an undocumented immigrant who's slipped through the cracks in the system. In reality you're the spider at the center of the web. Your leadership keeps the poor and the downtrodden safe, and in return they unearth their masters' secrets. Take either two dots of the Anonymity merit or two dots of the Safehouse Merit (**HtV pg. 70**), with both dots allocated to Secrecy. In addition, once per Session when participating in an investigation concerning the rich and powerful you may declare your network has already provided you with a Clue.

#### Stereotypes:

**Malleus Maleficarum:** The second estate oppresses the people. The first estate tells the people to accept it. But churches need dusting too.

**Ascending Ones:** Keep that poison away from our community. I've heard all the justifications, and I don't buy any of them.

**The Union:** You call yourselves the underdogs, ignoring that there are those less fortunate still. If you're not going to acknowledge us, you're no better than the rest.

**Night Watch:** Oppression affects people in different ways. Some people struggle everyday to remain true to themselves and put food on the table. And then you have these assholes.

**#Ammit:** You know those people, same as us. But do you know the people who bear the brunt of the anger of those you expose? The people who face most of the consequences of your games?

**Character Risk Analysis:** You'll look the other way as people like us are exploited. Don't pretend you have to serve them and don't pretend you're doing what you're doing because you care for people.

**The Light Company:** Everyone wants to climb the ladder, but we help those who can't.

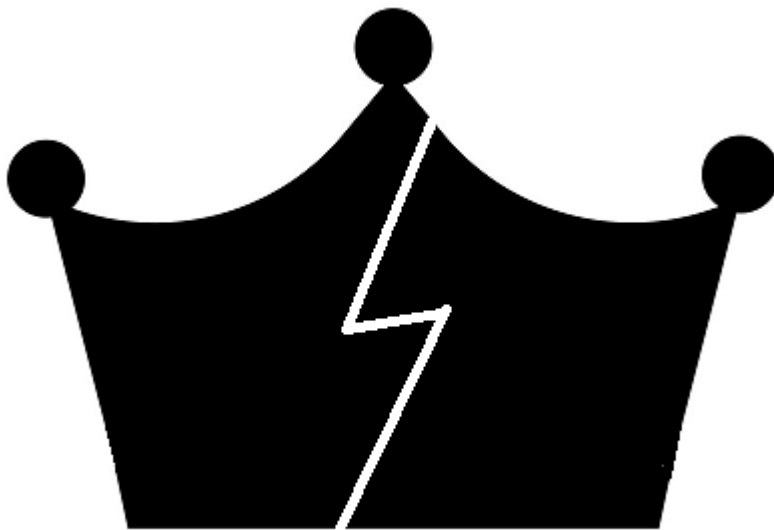
**The Star of Bethlehem:** You ground those with the power to help and prepare to fight a war that will never come. I wish we could afford such nonsense.

**The People's Guard:** The weakest suffer the most in revolution and war. Take your dreams elsewhere, we have enough problems as it is.

**The Magisters of the Economie:** There will always be those who believe that the rich can own the poor, and we will always stand against them.

*"We can look after ourselves, thank you."*

## The People's Guard: *The Egalitarians*



*"Death to the witch! Death to the witch!"*

*The men and women in the assembly enthusiastically repeated their mantra as the pale-faced Noble stepped through the crowd, her face low. She was in her human form, her hands tied behind her back, scratches and cuts all over their body; the jailors had not bothered being kind to her. Most people would probably have felt sorry for this young woman; but all the crowd saw was the sinister, veiled witch who had corrupted their home these last weeks, and taken the lives of six men before they finally managed to get her. And now, they wanted payback.*

*They finally reached the scaffold, and made her kneel. The leader approached and forced her to look at him.*

*"Any last word, my lady?" he sarcastically asked.*

*She gave him a cold, arrogant stare.*

*"The Last Empress won't tolerate this barbary," she whispered, her voice filled with hatred and disdain. "More will come to crush your little rebellion."*

*"Oh, but we are counting on it," the man snickered. "And when they do, we will send them your head as a message. Maybe then, your Queen will finally understand her time in this world is over."*

*He stood up and turned to the crowd.*

*"And let this be the fate of all those who dare step on the people!" He screamed.*

*The crowd cheered once again. The Noble was pushed ahead, and her executioner raised his axe. She closed her eyes as the blade fell on her neck.*

The Guard is perhaps the only conspiracy that can trace their direct roots from the present all

the way back to their founding. That's impressive enough, but the second is that they've managed to stay in place as long as they have despite being one of the youngest conspiracies in existence as well.

The People's Guard was a small force of revolutionaries in Northern France during the French Revolution. Angered that their grain was being squandered on Versailles and the noble palaces, the small force of farmers and artisans had heard of the unrest in Paris and across France. Gathering together, they realized that the target of their anger was obvious; the local duchess was nothing more than a pampered pet of her husband, growing healthier on good food as the children starved and the elderly withered away.

When news finally arrived of the assault on the Bastille and the uprising Parisians, the People's Guard realized their time had arrived. Seizing what few weapons they had and forming their band, they marched on the noble's palace and stormed the gates. The few guards fell quickly, unwilling to fire on their countrymen in such desperate times. Only entering the castle itself was another matter. The second the great doors were breached, the group was set on by all manner of household items. Wardrobes, coat racks, even the tea set and china were attacking them. Of course, once the initial shock wore off, they quickly set on the demonic objects with a purpose. Not only was their noblewoman a careless wench, she was a witch.

Fighting up to her own personal chambers, they found her weeping over her vanity with her handmaidens trying to look threatening as they held daggers in their hands. They were easily dispatched, but the duchess proved to be a fight. Her magic somehow summoned up the ghosts of all those lost to famine and disease in the area, setting them upon family and friends in a nightmarish mockery of the fighting outside the walls of the palace. It wasn't enough though, the people struggled through to finally kill the woman, albeit at the cost of many lives. With her dying breath she cursed them, "Rebels, you're nothing but rebels."

The men and women who killed her stood proudly, and decided to embrace the title she gave them. They also knew that where you found one dead rat, ten more were in the grain store. They spread through the revolution, scouring France for more beings like the one they found. They found them not just in the palaces though. They found them in the ghettos, busy burning down buildings that housed dozens of families, in convents, trying to steer the faithful away from the love of God, even building cults around their own personalities to make themselves the new queens of France.

Eventually, revolutionary fervor spread across Europe, and the Peasant's Guard with them. The flame of the Vigil had been fully lit, a bonfire spreading through the disenfranchised and hungry of Europe.

Yet in France, the Reign of Terror drew their focus back. What was supposed to be the beginning of an enlightened new nation soon turned into petty political scheming and bickering, ending in death and mayhem. Still, revolution does not die easily, and the People's Guard persisted. They stood watch as France rebuilt, taking care to eliminate the diabolical nobles where they were found.



So it went, for decades at a time, the Guard withering as the revolutions died down but not truly disappearing. There's always someone hungry, someone hurting, someone looking to find a reason. The Guard didn't stop hunting, they just became cleverer. Mobs of pitchforks and torches gave way to groups working to fight the status quo. Anarchist cells were suborned, new recruits to the cause. Freethinkers were interviewed, their ideas discussed in "hypothetical" contexts for ideas and plans. The Guard spread through Europe again, patrolling the poorhouses in London and the factories in Berlin. More nobles were found, and killed. The casualties were high, but there were signs of progress at least. Members maintained what contact they could for the era, mailing coded letters by the fastest means possible and even paying off gypsies to act as couriers across the borders. Three groups of the nobles were securely identified; the Weeping, who claimed that everything they did was for a greater purpose. The Wrathful, who believed that the only way to save the world was to burn everything down to ash. The Selfish, who claimed that theirs was the only way, and that all others should pay heed and bow in supplication. They also found out that there were darker creatures involved in their war. Creatures that were men, or more accurately once men. Black, infected things that made their lairs in the dark and despoiled places of the earth.

Then the Russian Revolution happened, and everything went haywire.

At first, the Guard took part on the side of the Bolsheviks, trudging through the Russian aristocracy to find the nobles hiding within. Then the Bolsheviks were pushed aside as the communists took control. Suddenly the brotherhood of communist principles was morphed into something unrecognizable, a police-state where only a select few held the power as the people were forced into subservience. Disgusted, the Guard could do nothing as the secret police rooted them out. It wasn't until later that the Egalitarians found that their enemies had used sections of the Soviet state against them, hoping to use the new power to promote their own vision (Unaware that the Soviets were already forming their own hunters to replace the fractured power of the tsar's court).

Forced underground again, the Guard did little through World War II and the early years of the Cold War. Their state was bad enough that other conspiracies circled their hideouts and safe houses, hoping to snatch up the useful members and have the rest arrested or eliminated. Then the Civil Rights movement picked up in America, and the Guard found fertile grounds.

Vampires hated the movement for "riling up" once subservient feeding grounds. Werewolves raged at a passive flock stepping up to a higher station. Mages cursed the idea that those without magic would try to better their lives without their permission from on high. Worse, the "royals" appeared again. They tried to keep the movement in check, using all manner of foul and emotionally manipulating magics to steer the works of the great names of the movement into disrepute. The Guard took to this challenge head on, facing down these threats with sheer determination. Unfortunately, America's gun laws proved hard to face for the primarily European Guard, and casualties mounted.

By the 1970s, the assassination of the great names of the Civil Rights era had taken their toll. The movement stalled, and the Guard was scattered around the world trying to reunite

and return to their roots. Unfortunately, other conspiracies were enforcing the status quo as often as the monsters. American men in black, Catholic inquisitors, ancient orders wielding strange magics, all of them saw the Guard as much an enemy as the monsters. It was a never-ending source of confusion for the Guard, as they knew that secrecy of what was truly happening in the world was more valuable to their actions than revealing everything and causing a panic.

That was when they discovered... well, they discovered *something*. While fighting a group of the royals the Guard managed to dispel the magics the royals used. Their abilities floundered, their manipulations worthless. There was still a fight of course, but by the end the cell that found the "gift" gave them a leg up. They started spreading what they found across the Guard, and the group was saved from slow, lingering extinction. That was when more royals started to appear. Younger, yes. More naïve about the world, even unwilling to face the fact that reality wasn't kind. Still, they were new royals. The Guard knew how to face royals now.

Capturing one, she spilled everything when she figured out what had formed the group. She went on at length about the Kingdom, about its glories and the hopes and dreams it would save. About queens waiting to be returned to earth and the beautiful life they would bring with them.

The local police found her body about a week later.

The Guard realized that it was just one oppressor trading in the old ways for a kindly face. Where were these "good" royals when the people were starving? Where did they hide when great men, men who changed the world without powers or magics, were cut down by assassins? What did they do when children grasped for help and found only scorn for the conditions of their birth. Their kingdom fell through the failures of the leaders, and their people suffered for it. Their time has passed like all old orders.

The path has been paved for men and women *without* a fluke of birth to decide the path for the future. It doesn't matter that the princesses are younger now, because the world has changed in ways to give the Guard new blood as well. Angry young men and women are as upset with the new nobility of corporate shills and government patsies. Marchers and protestors are the new fertile ground from which the Guard will grow again.

As it was in their early days; Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

\*A young man wears a ballcap, sunglasses, and a bandanna over his face, with a backpack on and a Molotov in one hand and a cell phone in the other. Hanging from a chain on his jeans are several transformation charms from various princesses.\*

*"The little guy isn't so little anymore, is he?"*

## The Enemy

The hostility of the People's Guard against Princesses surprises all but the most militant Hunter organizations. Most Compacts and Conspiracies don't necessarily trust or work with the Hopeful, but they at least feel uncomfortable openly using lethal force against them. The Egalitarians, on the other hand, have nothing but disdain for these so-called Nobles, and do not think twice before gunning them down. Although they can be secretive while planning, they are rarely subtle when they find the targets of their ire; executions followed by public displays are common, with the more old-fashioned members favoring decapitations and hanging on lampposts.

To them, each kind of Noble represents a facet of the old aristocracy they rose to fight. The Weeping are elitism and oppression, trying to dominate the people and drain their will to live for their own end. The Selfish are vanity and arrogance, convinced of their own superiority from birth. The Wrathful are the violent knights from medieval times, the ones who go on pointless crusades against a random enemy as an excuse to slaughter innocents in their blood thirst.

As for the younger ones, these so-called "good" Nobles? They may consider themselves a well-meaning aristocracy, but they still consider themselves aristocracy, taught by detached and presumptuous "Queens" that they have the power and the privilege to impose their views of a better world on the people. The People's Guard will never allow humanity to submit to such would-be monarchs.

Of course, this struggle against oppression doesn't limit itself to Nobles, though they are by far the primary target. The People's Guard has no particular qualms against being supernatural, but their hatred burns for anyone who sees themselves as meant to rule over those they see as beneath them. If magic won't keep the People's Guard from warring against the Nobility, neither will it prevent the People's Guard from striking at Vampires, Beasts, or any others who have turned into tyrants.

Needless to say, you don't stay in the Vigil that long without learning about the creatures of the Darkness, especially when you focus on fighting Nobles. Though their priority remains on the Hopeful, the Egalitarians usually end up having to fight Spawns and destroy Dark Nests, if just to prove that The People's Will is all humanity needs to save itself, rather than relying on Nobles who would, by deliberate intent or by unintended side effect, make it subservient to inhuman powers. They have noticed many times that these Nests tend to grow, or are even created whole cloth, by those they deem "Weeping" Nobles, and thus tend to view it as restoring life to lands that the Weeping steal away for their own ends. A handful of truly extremist Guard Cells, most often those who subscribe to an "Accelerationist" ideology (put simply, believing the only way the Revolution will ever come is if an apocalyptic disaster upends the standing political and economic orders) have occasionally tried using Dark Nests

for their own purposes, either as bait to lure in Nobles into ambushes, or even outright working with The Darkness within. However, such extremists will be marked for death by any other faction of the Guard that catches wind of their traitorous bargaining. To any Guard who hasn't lost sight of the true meaning of the Revolution, it is humanity against the forces of inhumanity, and The Darkness, though an enemy of the Nobles, is the most inhuman enemy in existence..

## Hunters

You used to be a cheerleader in high school. But then one day, something happened to one of your squadmates. She suddenly got more popular, and started acting more selfish, more arrogant. At first, you thought it was just the attention going to her head, but soon you realize something was wrong, with your classmates worshipping her as if they had been brainwashed. It was when you discovered she was using some weird magic to peel other girls' beauty off their faces that you realized the kind of monster she had become. It wasn't easy stabbing someone you had known for so long in her sleep, but when people around you started turning back to normal, you knew you had done the right thing. The People's Guard found and recruited you soon after.

You were born in the Guard; your parents were part of it, and as a kid they educated you, told you about the Nobles who were trying to oppress people. At first, you had doubts; you did agree, but at the same time you didn't feel like they deserved to die. Then one day, your father took you to his work, and showed you a half-burnt house. You walked among the corpses of all the people who had died, just because they were unlucky enough to find themselves in the crossfire between these so-called Nobles and their enemies. Now you no longer doubt, and you look forward to facing them.

You grew up surrounded by luxury, power, and connections. Other lesser people deserved every bit of scorn you and your peers heaped upon them, because, obviously, they weren't as hardworking or deserving as you. That outlook changed the day that bloodsucker, wanting your wealth and connections... took you. Made you into their tool and plaything, simply because they felt they could. When the common men and women burst down the door to the penthouse, constrained, and then executed the monster, you were rescued from more than just the creature. You'd seen what it had been like to be the pawn of those who thought their power entitled them slaves and minions. You may not speak to many of your old friends anymore, but now you have countless new ones.

## Factions

**The Bastille Spearhead** is the combat section. Skilled in both direct or covert warfare, they eagerly attack any supernaturals that oppose the will of the people, regardless of context.

Even high profile targets are not exempt. At odds with The Robespierres, this group prefers immediate executions. They see this as maintaining the spirit of the revolution.

*Free Specialties:* Weaponry (Knives)

**The Delacroix** are the propaganda section. They turn public ideas and opinions against supernaturals, or create propaganda which enamours the People's Guard to communities. Their survivor support groups can double as recruitment drives. In the worst cases, they have communities isolate potential supernaturals in a way reminiscent of a “witch hunt”.

*Free Specialties:* Politics (Propaganda)

**The Robespierres** are the intelligence gathering section. Tracking supernatural individuals and groups, they interrogate supernaturals for their accomplices. Official policy is that humans are off limits. At odds with The Bastille Spearhead, combat operations tend towards live capture. Executions only happen when supernaturals no longer have information of value.

*Free Specialties:* Intimidation (Interrogation)

**The Voltairites** are the ideological warfare section. Believing in liberty over self interest, they persuade supernaturals to abandon “self interest”, even when inadvisable or impossible. Supernaturals who cling to it are seen as guilty of tyranny and executed. For supernaturals convinced by “liberty”, rumours are these “Lafayettes” now march for the revolution.

*Free Specialties:* Academics (Philosophy)

## Systems

### Status

Due to their dislike of elitism and oppression, the People's Guard only have a hierarchy in the loosest sense of the term; typically, you grow in status among them through charisma and by proving yourself as someone who the others will *want* to follow.

- You have joined the Egalitarians' Revolution and proved your desire to fight the Nobles' magic aristocracy. You can purchase the Vox Populis Endowment.
- You have been in the Peasant's Guard for a while, and have learnt how to lead your comrades in coordination against oppressors. You get the Small Unit Tactic Merit (**The God-Machine Chronicle p.170**) for free, regardless of if you have the prerequisite or not. If you already have it, apply the three dots in merits to another relevant social merit.
- You have proved yourself a charismatic leader, and other Egalitarians look up to you as someone they can trust to lead and inspire them. You get the Inspiring Merit (**The God-Machine Chronicle p.167**) for free, regardless of if you have the prerequisite or not. If you already have it, apply the three dots in merits to another relevant social merit.

Stereotypes:

**The Union:** They have the right idea, but they get lost in protecting their little neighborhoods. There's a whole world out there, ready to be changed, and they just settle into their little ruts pretending to be the ones changing the world.

**Task Force: VALKYRIE:** The governments aren't the greatest evils, we've learned to accept that. What we won't accept is when their own pet monster hunters try to order us around. They hate the royals too though, let them do the heavy lifting then finish what's left.

**1** as yesterday's nobility. We can't take them on yet, not until we stop the royals, but keep an eye on them just in case. And watch over anyone protesting their offices.

**Ascending Ones:** You poison communities, you destroy all that people work for with your crime, and you *dare* to say we fight the same war? When did dragging mankind down count as protecting him?

**#Ammit:** You've backed down and convinced yourselves that slacktivism and exposing petty scandals will change the world.

**Character Risk Analysis:** They use daytime news and blogs as weapons against you and you laugh. Then you see the populace who should be your allies turn against you and you stop laughing.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** They coddle and spoil, and do nothing to deflate the privileged egos of the "Nobility."

**The Light Company:** Quislings who would sell us all into servitude to the hated aristocracy.

**Sanitation Workers Committee:** Reactionary traitors! For every person you help you hurt ten more by propping up a corrupt system. You're no better than the masters you serve.

**Magisters of the Economie:** There will always be people who believe themselves the rightful rulers of humanity. We will shatter their delusions and burn them down.

## The Magisters of the Economie: *the Parvenu*

*"All too often, our justice system leaves people unrehabilitated and unable to face a world that shuns them for the mistakes they have made. Our halfway house and its facilities are equipped to help these people, providing job skills and job placement in an environment that allows people to put their anger at the world behind them. All this with little to no cost to the taxpayer at large." Elizabeth cut the ribbon, and the crowd cheered.*

\*\*\*\*

*Elizabeth looked over the list of residents. It was prepared for her by hand, written with quill and ink. Yes, there was always a need for low-wage unskilled labor, but she had rather a surplus of it at the moment. Still, she knew where the cracks were, where she could get these people hired and unnoticed by the regulators and the people at large.*

*The door to her office burst open. A large man lunged at her, only to be held back by two other residents. He raved at her, "Who the hell are you?! What did you do to them?!"*

*Elizabeth closed her ledger with a sigh, "As your benefactor, I can't feel like you should be more grateful and less questioning."*

*"Cut the bullshit!" He spat back. "I can see what you're doing! You've got someone going around giving these people lobotomies or some shit. You're turning them into-"*

*"I don't need to hear this. I'm making something of these people that they never bothered to make themselves, and I'm giving their employers-to-be some much needed help." Elizabeth turned her head to address the two holding him back. "He's troubled. Strap him to the solitary bed and make sure he gets properly medicated."*

*The two of them nodded, and began dragging the man away as he resumed screaming, "I'll make you pay for this! I promise. When I'm done with you, they're going to need a closed casket!"*

*Elizabeth tried to close the door after the disturbance. She'd have to get that fixed. Her phone rang. She looked at the phone before she answered it, "Speak to me."*

*"Elizabeth. We found her."*

*"Have you narrowed it down yet?"*

*"No. She's a magic-user, but that's all we have. We'll have to get her to confirm if-"*

*"Fine. I'll be there." Elizabeth hung up and put the phone away. She pulled out a small silver fountain pen. She wanted to use it now, to allow the armor to flow over her, to feel in her hand the unnatural pistol from which fire would stream. She calmed down. She got her position through the planning and restraint that those so-called Nobles lacked, and if all went well and she was lucky, it would allow her to administer another retirement, one more to join the pair now relieved of their duties and sleeping soundly deep within her mansion.*

*And if it was just another supernatural freak, she'd put them to sleep for good. Such was her remit as a Magister, and one day, all of humanity would look to people like her to ensure that they too would sleep soundly.*

If hope once defined the human condition, now it's envy and want which do so. At least, that's what the Magisters of the Economie believe, and they make it their business to cater to the human condition and bring an end to the inhuman condition.

Originally an organization called the Magisters of the Crystal Crown, their entire purpose had been to serve as mortal guardians and counselors to a young Noble of high wealth and great birth who believed himself to be the heir to an ancient Queen, the Queen of Queens. His powers were great, but his ego and his belief that divine providence favored him was greater.

When a vampire lord began stealing the Noble's wealth, they counseled him to defeat the monster through a midday ambush. The Noble refused, challenging the vampire to open combat rather than compromise with his asinine beliefs. He brought his army, the vampires brought theirs, and soon, his servants were bested by the vampire's own minions. When it was clear his side had lost, he surrendered like a coward, agreeing to the vampire's ruinous terms.

Few Magisters survived that fateful night, but one in particular who did came to a revelation: Noble was more than a title, it was an asphyxiating mantle that punished them

from on high for breaking some code of ethics. But humanity was not bound so. If a human - if he could somehow take the reins of a Noble's magic without the yoke of the empathetic connection that bound the Noble, he could take his revenge on the monsters that slaughtered his colleagues and humiliated him, change the world... and earn his due reward.

And thus did that Magister set out to find a way to steal the powers of a Noble. Years of searching through esoteric texts and occult manuscripts told him only that his answer would be in dreams. He didn't understand; he didn't have to. His jealousy and anger infected even his dreams and took him where he needed to go. He found someone in the Dreamlands, one who offered him a deal.

He still served the Noble after all these years, and over drinks he played upon the Noble's vanity and easily got his guard down (as the Hunter-to-be suspected, the Noble had not improved after all these years). Over a final toast the Noble slumped onto the table, drugged and unconscious. The Magister brought his body to a glass coffin and locked it in golden chains. That night, the Dream Spider came to him in his dream and thanked the Magister for returning the "Missing Ward" to her custody.

The man had kept his part of the bargain and in the Dreamlands the Dream Spider handed him the Noble's ornate mirrored scepter. Upon awakening the Magister didn't find the magical token but could feel its power within himself just waiting to be called upon. As the Noble slept, the Magister took the Noble's wealth and had the Noble's retainers swear loyalty to him. Together, they vowed to slay the monsters and find others suitable to replace the Nobles, founding the Hunter group that would grow into the Conspiracy that it has become.

These days, the Magisters of the Economie would say that they are business savvy men and women who fight evil with their wealth and connections, provide for humanity, and involve themselves in the Hunt as a sign of leadership. What they don't say is that they take humans and Nobles and sell them to the Wardens of the Dreamlands in exchange for servants and power. And many of them certainly won't admit that they just want to be vigilantes. Many Hunt professionally, but many others have simply had the power fantasy of punching evil with an arsenal they "bought" themselves and have jumped at the chance.

To a Magister of the Economie, the Hunt and the Light are both business ventures and means to achieve a kingdom, or at least what passes for one in this age. To them, the divine powers of the Queens should belong to the modern merchant class, not spoiled Nobles clinging to the past who have failed to create anything real or long lasting. They are doing humanity a service by reallocating the Light for themselves and using it to end nightmares and make dreams happen more effectively and efficiently than the Nobles ever could. Or at least, that's what they tell themselves.

Either way, the Magisters of the Economie can wield tremendous political and financial power on the hunt. And when they hunt personally, they can bring powerful weapons to bear. While their main goals are to retire the Nobility, they are well aware of the other threats in the night and more often than not take action to rid the community of them, unless of course they stand to make a profit by having them around...

## The Enemy

Many would be surprised to learn that the Magisters of the Economie don't consider the



Nobles their enemy. No, their enemies are the actual monsters, the enemies of all mankind. Such creatures are violent, brutish, and filthy. The Magisters despise all such guttertrash, but they take a personal insult to those monsters who think their powers entitle them to respect and rank, or who have formed their own hierarchies in mockery of human society. Nobles are to be retired; Monsters are to be crushed. The Magisters of the Economie will use their pull to get monster lairs razed in the name of "urban renewal," lobby for industrial and regulatory action that inconveniences the creatures, and when the time comes they provoke the monsters into a response, at which point a law enforcement flush with equipment joins the Magister's personal squads to take them down. Of course, many of these tactics stand to raise the financial and social standard of the Magister; if a monster isn't too out of control, a Magister may well milk their presence for all its worth before finally putting an end to it. Magisters don't distinguish between creatures of Darkness and other monsters. To them any slain monster is a shot to their ego, a proof of concept that their Hunt is superior to the current Noble organization.

Publicly, Magisters will display their "love of humanity" through charity drives or philanthropic works and claim they have nothing but respect for those who work hard and are loyal customers. In truth, they have nothing but contempt for those people they see as parasitic, disobedient, ungrateful, or nosy. They will exploit people as far as the law allows, and farther when they have the chance. They also prey on those who are disadvantaged and ignored or shunned by society, taking them in and subjecting them to Usurpation to create cheap labor and "redemption" puff pieces. They tell each other that this is simply "recycling" applied to the refuse of humanity. Some of them believe it, even when they are using people as assets to trade or pawns against their enemies. Usurpation of high-profile people is rare, but it can happen if a Magister is desperate or spiteful enough.

If Nobles aren't enemies, then what are they? Well, they're the old guard, the current board of directors who haven't run a profit in centuries. It's true many of them are young in body, but their codes of conduct are positively archaic (and many of them are reincarnated anyways, ancients trying to conceal their age). They did respectable work in their day, but their time has come and gone, and it's time to put them out to pasture. The Magisters of the Economie see themselves as the rightful inheritors of the Light business, and if a Noble doesn't want to step down and take a permanent retirement in the Dreamlands? Well, it's for their own good. Of course, if a Magister can profit off the Noble before retiring them, they are loath to refuse the opportunity.

## Hunters

They said you had it all, but you knew better. You had someone else drive your sports car. You had staff to clean your house while you crashed at hotels on business trips. You didn't even schedule your own day. You did your job, but at night you dreamed of doing something wonderful with your own hands. You have that chance now. You pencil in long nights where you, your fellow Magisters, and your collected kill squads go out and take on the nastiest beasts on the block. Yes, those are gashes from fighting. You're comfortable with them. You are enlightened.

The Noble didn't know what she was doing. She was a bucket when the city needed a brigade. So you gathered a few staff to handle your own affairs, you acquired her as an asset, and then you took over her operations. You're not as strong as she is, but you have all

sorts of force multipliers. Money is the obvious one, your connections and place in the community are others. And of course the people you can buy and the guns you can equip them with make a stronger force than she ever could have mustered. She would have died saving this city; you'll live to see it thrive, and the people will live to remember who made it all happen.

Nobles say they want happier people; you're the one who makes it happen. You take the dregs of society and you turn them over to the Wardens for a rehab better than anything humans have come up with so far. The people they become clean up well, work hard, ask little, and know a few tricks. Most of them you just make useful. Others make great gifts for those who keep their expectations realistic - it sure beats a gift card. But you keep the best ones for yourself. They get their place in the world and you get yours: a life that drives others mad with envy in exchange for clearing out some monsters now and then. It's more than fair for everyone. Of course the Nobles don't see it that way. They believe that free will is actually free, something people don't have to earn like everything else in this world. They want to shut you down, but you're sure that you can drive them out of business. After all, your labor is cheaper than theirs.

You're not a Magister. You don't even know what a Magister is. What you know is that this person you met on a lunch run is the most amazing person you've ever met, and not just because she knows magic. When she speaks of building a better world, your heart can't help but take flight. She could do so much more with the right support. You help a little, but you're just a low-level employee of little importance. That's why when you sent memos to your company's CEO, the one who just last week was at the ground-breaking ceremony of a new juvenile community center, you didn't expect much. You didn't mention the magic, but to your surprise the CEO read the memo. Even more incredible, she has invited you and your new friend to dinner at her house. It's amazing; starting tonight, great things are going to happen.

## Factions

The **CEOs** believe that they should lead the Hunt from detached positions of leadership; the pawns are there to protect the King and Queen, are they not? They gather as much tactical, financial and psychological information as they can on natural and supernatural threats and pass it on to their staff (or occasionally another Magister) to act on.

*Free Specialty:* Persuasion (Leadership)

The **Greenbacks** believe in fighting monsters personally. Some do it because they think it is the proper way to Hunt. Others just want to play out their fantasies of using their wealth to beat up "bad guys" on the street. A few attempt to wage a personal war on mundane crime, although the inefficiency of such a venture tends to put a stop to it.

*Free Specialty:* Stealth (Stakeouts)

The **People People** are the main "asset acquirers" of the conspiracy. Sometimes they look through information given to them and decide what "assets" to "acquire" and how to get them to where they can be "acquired." But more often they will run places like rehabilitation centers, asylums, and camps where the change in personality can be better justified. A good People Person looks for someone with a lack of relationships who will be of use to the

Magisters of the Economie. either directly or as an obstacle removed. They also look for those with excellent aesthetic qualities (that indicate good health and better overall potential, they emphatically claim).

*Free Specialty:* Persuasion (Fast Talking)

The **Office of Internal Audits** seeks out and keeps tabs on still-unretired Nobles. In most cases, a Magister will arrange for an unknowing kind-hearted contact often employed in a profession Nobles trust, such as first responders or counselors, to cross paths with the Noble (or suspected Noble). Said patsy will likely be awed by the Noble's power (or impressed by the youth's potential) and sympathetic to their cause, offering encouragement and support - and unwittingly reporting the child's exploits back to a wealthy philanthropist they know that they're sure could do a lot of good if only the youth were to meet them. A few daring (or perhaps mad with ego) Magisters infiltrate directly by posing as a member of these groups, or even as a Sworn or Noble, seeking to "inspect" their target personally and confirm their "unfitness" for continued operations.

*Free Specialty:* Persuasion (Inspiring) Or Subterfuge (Long Cons)

## System

### Status

A Magister rises the ranks by cutting ever more profitable deals in service to the Hunt, either in real life or with the Wardens. Your dots in Status (Magisters of the Economie) can't exceed your Resources or your Usurpation by more than one Dot.

- They say that friendship is the real wealth. Might be fun. You gain access to the Usurpation Endowment.
- The other Magisters are impressed by your deal-cutting, and are willing to cut deals of their own with you. Gain two dots in Allies (Magisters of the Economie)
- You're either a feared puppet master or the face of the group. Gain or add three dots in either Anonymity or Fame.

### Lines in the Sand

The following are suggested Code modifications for Magisters of the Economie:

- Replace "Causing significant harm to a person" with "Ignoring someone who is an impediment to operations against monsters."
- Replace "Learning that a monster harmed a person when you could have done something to stop it, but didn't" with "Allowing a monster to remain when their continued presence risks your bottom line."
- Replace "Gaining or bestowing power from an obviously monstrous source" with "Accept the authority of a non-Magister supernatural organization that is influencing mortal society."

## Stereotypes:

**Ashwood Abbey:** The real thrill isn't putting monsters in their graves. It's in building your legacy over that grave.

**Merrick Institute:** It turns out they're not Nobles or Sworn at all. Just damaged goods, not even worth the trouble.

**The Cheiron Group:** Garbage in, garbage out. Vermin-based knockoffs will never compare to the genuine article.

**Hototogisu:** Your cleverness impresses me, but don't employ those monsters when you're done with them. You're better than that.

**The Wilde Society:** Their art lives in galleries while they live in poverty and madness. A stark lesson of what happens when you have talent without good business sense.

**#Ammit:** Your internal conduct is unprofessional, you have no proper org chart, your priorities need realignment, and your branding makes no sense.

**Character Risk Analysis:** You can make the sheep realize that monsters have it coming and that Nobles are in over their heads without them learning that monsters or Nobles exist. I respect that. But don't lecture me on "Power corrupts;" I'm not just someone you can trust with this power, I'm the *only* one you can trust with this power.

**Sanitation Workers Committee:** This is what happens when the help forgets their place. We know just how to handle labor quibbles like this.

**The Star of Bethlehem:** I can see why you'd go with the childcare paradigm, but they're not the demographic you think they are. We can all profit if you let us take them off your hands.

**The People's Guard:** They understand that the "Nobles" are unfit to rule, but they need to learn that someone always has to be Higher, and who is better than us?

**The Light Company:** You can follow us into peace and prosperity, or you could follow those "Nobles" into obsolescence. Don't be stupid.

*"I'm a titan of business and humanity. You're a hidebound soul with the emotional maturity of a teenager and the power to level a city block. I'm the good guy here, and it's time we discussed your retirement."*

## New Merits

Unless specified otherwise, all hunter characters can purchase the following Social Merits

### Devil's Advocate(Prequisite:Character Risk Analysis (•-•••••))

An Employee of Character Risk Analysis must be flexible in mind and morals to help level the playing field against supernatural troublemakers. When assigned to a new client, the employee decides what mental and social techniques will help them avoid being convinced or coerced.

**Effect:** The character gains Mental and Social Merits whose total cost cannot exceed her dots in this Merit. Said merits must involve protecting the character from being deceived or manipulated into taking a course of action. Such Merits include (but per Storyteller discretion may not be limited to) Indomitable, Trained Observer, Closed Book, Iron Will, Spin Doctor,

and Table Turner. The character may take these Merits without meeting their prerequisites. Once the merits are chosen, they cannot be changed until the job with the client is complete.

### Secret Keeper (••)

**Prerequisite:** Player character

**Effect:** Your character knows both the human and supernatural forms of a princess, and has sworn above all else to help them keep the secret. You can apply the Rote Action rule to any roll whose purpose is to protect against an attempt to pry the secret from you. This can be used against both mundane and supernatural attempts.

## Supernatural Merits

### Beacon (•)

**Prerequisite:** Cannot have the Vice-Ridden Merit.

**Effect:** While not really a Noble, your character's soul is touched by the Light, meaning she has such a level of optimism and kindness she could be one, and has the potential to become so. The Hopeful appreciate her company, and are more likely to trust her. She gets the **Virtuous** Merit for free, benefits from a +1 bonus in social skills when dealing with Nobles, and automatically starts with a Good Impression toward them as long as she doesn't act aggressive or insult them. She also can activate a Bequest despite lacking an Inner Light (see the **Bequest** merit below for more details). Finally, as an optional rule, you may start with three dots of social merits for free, to reflect your ability to easily make friends.

**Drawback:** Unfortunately, Beacons tend to display the same exacerbated empathy as Nobles. Characters with the Beacon merit share the Princess' Bane of Hyper-Empathy; since they lack an Inner Light, they roll 1 dice instead. Seeing how they don't transform nor recover Willpower by helping people, and as such ignore the result caused by Exceptional Success on the roll, this isn't quite as dangerous, but it can still cause them to lose their Defense in bad situations, making them vulnerable.

In addition, since they have been touched by the Light, Beacons are a favored prey for all its opponents; they are recognized on sight by Spawns of the Darkness, their presence triggers any form of **Unseen Sense** related to the Light, and should they travel to the Dreamlands, the light inside their soul would make them a vulnerable target to the Wardens.

On the side of storytelling, Beacons have a strong chance to eventually turn into Nobles, which can become problematic in some circumstances. This isn't quite as bad as knowing your colleague could turn into a werewolf or a slasher, but inside Cells or organizations who distrust the Hopeful, such as Character Risk Analysis or the People's Guard (*especially* the People's Guard), paranoia will soon kick in.

### Dream Travel (• or •••)

**Effect:** This Merit allows people to enter the Dreamlands while sleeping. The character may

use any method that allows them to fall asleep and go to the Primordial Dream to end up in the Dreamlands instead. Sworn and Nobles may keep and use this Merit, as may characters with an endowment that allows entry into the Primordial Dream. The three-dot version also allows them to generate some kind of mind-shield, protecting them against the effects of the Gales. The character gets a +1 bonus to resist getting Galemasks.

#### Bequests (• - •••••)

**Prerequisite:** Noble, the Sworn Endowment or the Beacon Merit (characters without any of these can still own a Bequest, but they cannot use its power, unless it's Duty-Bound).

**Effect:** You own a Bequest, one of the strange artifacts believed to come from the mysterious Dreamlands, which are sometimes offered by Nobles to mortals they trust. Bequests carry the power of the Dreamlands, and allow their user the magic held within dreams.

A Noble who purchases a Dread Power may do so in the form of Bequests. Bequests are physical objects that may be passed from a Noble to another character, and dots in Bequests cannot be refunded unless the object is irrevocably destroyed. The rating of a Bequest is the same as the Dread Power it contains (the Storyteller determines the ratings of Dread Powers that have not been assigned ratings). A Noble who purchases a Bequest may increase its rating (and cost) by one dot to make it Duty-Bound.

Activating a Bequest normally requires a character to have an Potency of at least 1 and pay the Dread Power's cost. Bequests whose Dread Powers have no cost in willpower to activate require spending 1 Willpower, and the Dread Power is available for one scene. Bequests still require a roll with the Dread Power's attached dice pool (if any).

A Duty-Bound Bequest may be activated by any character through performing a specific task. Bequests based on 1-dot Dread Powers can be primed by an action taking as little as a turn. Bequests based on 3-dot Dread Powers usually require a scene or two to prime. Bequests based on 5-dot Dread Powers require at least a session to prepare. Once such a Bequest is activated, its cost in Willpower must be paid and the appropriate roll made as above.

**Sample Bequests:** a knife which when activated turns into a magic sword (**Dread Attack**), a Shotgun capable of turning into a futuristic raygun with a non-lethal mode (**Blast** and **Merciful**), a pendant that brings luck to whoever triggers it (**Blessing**).

#### Prophetic Dreams (• - •••••)

**Prerequisite:** The Dream Travel merit. Princesses may purchase it without this prerequisite, since they have a natural ability to travel in the Dreamlands.

**Effect:** Your character possesses an unusually strong connection to the Dreamlands, and may exploit this connection to get prophetic visions during his sleep. Once per session, whenever he sleeps, you can choose to roll Wits + Empathy - 2. If your character has the Shadow condition, the penalty caused by this condition apply as well. You may ignore the -2 penalty if you use the Procedure Tactic, the Astral Implants, or the Drop of Dream.

**Dramatic Failure:** The character suffers a fake prophetic vision.

**Failure:** Nothing happens that night.

**Success:** Your character receives a vision giving you information about the future. You gain at least one clue per dot in this merit.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to the benefit of a regular success, you gain the Informed Condition regarding the subject of your vision.

### Sworn (• - .....)

A person with this merit has taken an oath of Fealty to a Noble and become Sworn. This has several effects on the character:

- He gets the ability to regain 1 Willpower whenever he helps a Princess fight the Darkness; or refresh full Willpower when said Princess is the one who granted him the merit;
- He gets the Invoke Dread Power for free, and may use his Sworn rating as Potency for the purpose of calculating the bonus it grants. He also gets a single additional Dread Power, which must be one the Princess who knighted him has.
- He suffers the Nobles' Ban of Hyper-Empathy.

A person may voluntarily give up the Sworn merit. This is a breaking point with a penalty equal to their dots in Sworn. All effects and abilities gained from being Sworn are lost, and the dots spent in the merit refunded as per Sanctity of Merits.

### Sidebar: Sworn Court Powers

Optionally, if you wish to involve the Courts in the Chronicles, you may replace the second Dread Power granted by the Sworn merit with one of the powers below based on the court you serve:

- Sworn from the Court of **Clubs** may spend 1 Willpower to gain a merit appropriate for adaptation to their surroundings; for example, they could gain the Danger Sense merit if they are in a hostile jungle, or Parkour while visiting an urban area. The number of dots in this merit is capped by their Enhanced dots in the Clubs' philosophy, and this power cannot create supernatural merits, nor social external merits such as allies and contacts. It lasts for an entire session.
- Sworns from the Court of **Diamonds** can spend 1 Willpower to add their Enhancement dot in the Diamonds philosophy to a single roll to create equipment. This doesn't include Jury-rigging, but does include abstract equipment like plans.
- Sworns from the Court of **Hearts** can spend 1 Willpower to add the lower of their dots in Status or Enhancement dots in the Heart philosophy to any roll where they are acting to fulfill their duties within an organization represented by the Status merit.
- Sworns from the Court of **Spades** can spend 1 Willpower to add their Enhancement dot in the Spades philosophy to a roll to create a false Clue, or tamper with an existing one. They may also spend 1 Willpower to add the same bonus to an Athletic, Stealth, Streetwise or Subterfuge to get out of trouble.

- Sworns from the Court of **Swords** can spend 1 Willpower to add to a roll 1 third (round up) of the dice pool the Princess they swore allegiance to would have had in this action while Transformed. Apply a -2 penalty if the Princess isn't present.
- Sworns from the Court of **Tears** have access to the Forcefield ability available to Nobles.
- Sworns from the Court of **Storms** may spend 1 Willpower to turn wound penalties into bonuses and ignore Stamina roll to stay conscious. The effect lasts for a scene.
- Sworns from the Court of **Mirrors** can spend 1 Willpower to add a single dice to any roll made by the Princess they swore allegiance to.

#### Sidebar: Alternative crossover rules

Any player with the Dream or Vocation version of **Princess: the Hopeful** probably figured out the Sworn merit is based off the Sworn template from these books. And indeed, they are meant to be one and the same; the rules presented here, like the rest, are merely meant to provide a version of the Sworns playable using only the Hunter book. If you wish to use the Princess variant instead, you can instead have this benefit give characters the Sworn template; just replace the Dread Power with Practical Magic, the Enhancement dots with Invocations, the ability to recover Willpower with a free Dedication merit, and Hyper-Empathy with Sensitivity, as well as any other adjustment. Keep the ability to raise your Invocation by buying new dots in the Endowment; Sworns from the Crown Jewels tend to grow faster in power thanks to the support of their Compact. This only applies to a specific Invocation however; if you wish to buy new additional Invocations, spend 3 Experiences to raise them as normal.

#### Supernatural Repulsion (•••)

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural Resistance •+ or any form of Supernatural Tolerance.

**Effect:** The character can spread their resistance to the supernatural outwards. They add their Supernatural Resistance or Supernatural Tolerance to their Abjuration rolls.

#### Sidebar: Connection with Princess: the Hopeful

Those who read **Princess the Hopeful** probably noticed some of the merits described here are mostly alternative versions of merits from that book. This is intentional: like a good chunk of this book, these are meant to be a simplified version of them for players who wish to play a Hunter Chronicle involving lore from the Hopeful without needing the original book. If you possess the actual Princess corebook, like for the rest, we encourage you to use merits from there instead if you wish.



## New Endowments

### Sidebar: What does or doesn't work

For those interested, here is a description of how the Endowments described in the various Hunter books can be used against Nobles and Spawns of the Darkness:

- Etheric Capsule Rounds and Etheric Goggles (**Hunter the Vigil 2E, p. 100-101**) both work on Dreamlanders (including Wardens) and Spawns of the Darkness in the Twilight state as if they were ghosts or spirits.
- Equalizer Grenades (**Hunter the Vigil 2E, p. 100**) can be used to disrupt a Princess' Dual Form, since while superficial, this does count as a form of shapeshifting. Because of this, the Hopeful are very wary when dealing with TFFV agents. They also work on any form of Lurker or Infiltrator capable of shapeshifting, though they obviously won't cause permanent mutations to go away.
- Vade Retro Satana (**Hunter the Vigil 2E, pp. 104**) can be used to reinforce the dice pool of an Abjuration intended to exorcise a Nest. In fact, it's considered one of the most efficient ways to deal with them, to the point most hunter cells now make a habit of always bringing at least one priest or nun from the Malleus Maleficarum if they can help it when dealing with the Darkness.
- Drop of Dreams (**H: tV Tooth and Nail, pp. 21**) can be used by someone with the Dream Travel Merit to travel to the Dreamlands. On a dramatic failure, instead the nearest Noble feels the dreamer's presence.
- A Relic with the Dream Relic enhancement (**H: tV Tooth and Nail, pp. 21**) can manifest in the Dreamlands or in the dreams of a Tainted Area.
- The exceptional success of Perseus' Mirrored Shield (**H: tV Tooth and Nail, pp. 21**) causes a Clash of Wills when used on a transformed Noble. It does not work on the Noble's human side.
- An untransformed Noble is considered a human to any Endowment working specifically on supernaturals and not on mortals, such as the blessing of Saint George's Sword (**H: tV Tooth and Nail, pp. 21**) or the Blessed Protection of St. Agrippina (**Hunter the Vigil, pp. 159-160**).

### Sidebar: Dueling Identities

*"In her mundane identity a Princess is hardly recognizable as having any magic at all, but in her transformed identity. Ah, what a difference that is. Magic flows through her body, it is on the level of blood or bone."*

-Princess: the Hopeful, Dream Version 9, Vocation Version 4

You may have noticed that methods that directly pierce a transformed Noble's Dual Identity and reveal their untransformed self causes a Clash of Wills. This is deliberate. The

distinction between human self and supernatural self is perhaps more central to a Noble than it is to any other character. And it's not just because one form is stronger - both a Noble's human self and their supernatural self are expected and even encouraged by the setting of **Princess: The Hopeful** to be active in the world, and anything which can see through that which disguises a monster's identity will thus have a disproportionate effect on Nobles. A Storyteller who wishes to put Nobles on par with other supernatural beings where such effects are concerned should discuss it with their table beforehand.

Mechanically, for the default purposes of this supplement untransformed Nobles are considered mundanely human (even though they have some supernatural abilities) and transformed Nobles are considered "Fundamentally Human" (See "Human Hearts Grown Dark," **H:tV Corebook p. 43** and **Beast: the Primordial p. 87**). This does not mean that untransformed Nobles actually are mundanely human (and it certainly does not mean that characters in-universe will consider them as such), only that supernatural abilities will in most cases treat them as mundanely human. Storytellers who wish to tinker with these settings (by ruling that untransformed Nobles are supernatural on some level or that "Kinship Applies/Does Not Apply" to Nobles, for example) are also encouraged to discuss this with the table beforehand.

## Advanced Armory

### Aetheric Airgap System

Many supernaturals can wreak havoc with a mere touch; Spawns of the Darkness can have poisonous blood and body fluids, some Beasts can cut through your flesh as if their hands were claws, and many Changelings can make their very skin as burning as fire. To put such powers out of reach, Task: Force VALKYRIE invented the Aetheric Airgap System. This equipment consists of two wrist bracelets and two ankle bracelets worn (willingly or unwillingly) by the user. It also has two models; one is operated by the user, another activated remotely.

**Loadout:** 1 session

**Dice Pool:** None (user-operated model), Strength + Brawl - Defense (remotely activated model)

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** 1 scene

When user-operated, the Aetheric Aether System is worn by the agent at all times, and only requires an instant action to activate by pressing a button on one of the bracelets. The remotely activated version can be triggered through a remote, but requires a touch action first to forcefully put them on the target (though tricking the target into putting them on also is an option).

Once activated, the System projects a thin layer of energy over the user or target, that blocks the transmission of supernatural powers; any Dread Power relying on touch made against the user (for the user-operated model) or by the target (remotely activated model) triggers a Clash of Will with the user's Higher Resistance Attribute + Advanced Armory; passive Dread

Powers that allows to inflict damage by touch (such as Dread Attack) see their damage reduced by 2 as if absorbed by Armor. The protection lasts for 1 scene.

The field goes both ways; agents wearing the user-operated model suffer a -2 penalty when trying to use supernatural abilities based on touch, and targets wearing the remotely activated version count as having 2 Armor against such powers.

## Eye of Odin

Update to 2E:

Effects: Immediate Effect (0)

Cost: Loadout 1 session (-1), Instant action with a roll (-1)

Backlash:

Total: 0 - 2

While the Equalizer Grenade deals with the *physical* shape-shifting, not all creatures need to physically change to hide. Princesses are impossible to identify thanks to the strange magic covering their identity, Changelings and Prometheans have near-perfect human disguises, and Demons steal people's lives to wear them like masks. While TFV has yet to figure out a reliable way to pierce through these, you don't need to see through a disguise to notice the ENE wearing it is acting unusually. VALKYRIE operates a vast automated system called the Eye of Odin, which piggybacks on government surveillance over social media, financial transactions, phones, and the internet in general to flag anything which might indicate ENE activity.

**Function:** Once per session, a character with this Endowment can contact headquarters and ask for a report on a specific area. The area can be a school, a sheriff department, a small town or anything similar. Upon receiving a request, a team of specially trained analysts will begin combing through flagged material to identify persons of interest. Even if a Princess fastidiously avoids using social media, the Eye of Odin might still flag a suspicious spike in academic achievements and positive sentiments on social media, which when cross referenced with debit card that purchased a bulk order of socks at 11pm, next to a homeless shelter, suggesting someone is either a Princess or inspired to follow a Noble's example. Once the area has been chosen, roll the character's TFV Status x 2 to requisition a report. If the monster they are looking for has the Anonymity Merit, apply the merit's dots as a penalty to the roll.

Regardless of what you get, headquarters will present your character a list of characters suspected to be ENEs in the area; the result merely serves to decide how accurate and useful said list will be:

### Roll Results:

**Dramatic Failure:** 80% of the people on the list are red herrings, while 20% of the list are legitimately people of interest. Moreover, if the targeted monster has an appropriate ability (such as a Princess' prophetic dreams or a mad scientist with an AI watching for spies), they are alerted to the fact that someone is actively looking for them.

**Failure:** Your request gets stuck in a queue behind higher priority items. You get the results of a success, at the start of the next session.

**Success:** 40% of the people on your list are red herring, while the remaining 60% are people of interest: unwitting pawns, cultists, loyal ghouls, Sworn, wolf-blooded or equivalent. None of them is the monster, however. Alternatively you learn that there is no monster present.

**Exceptional Success:** Same as success, but one of the people on the list is indeed the monster you are looking for.

## Benedictions

### The Christ's Determination

The Bible tells how Jesus himself, after being baptized by John the Baptist, was confronted for forty days and nights by Satan himself. The Devil tried his best to tempt him, but was unable to win, and eventually left. It was this incorruptible determination members of the Malleus Maleficarum were trying to reproduce when coming up with this Benediction: by Invoking it, their members can temporarily shield their soul against the insidious corruption of the Darkness, as well as any influence from malevolent Tainted Places. Compared to most rites in the Conspiracy, this Benediction is relatively recent. There are rumors the Order of St Ambrose actually developed it with the collaboration of Nobles, though they strongly deny it when asked about it.

**Target success total: 8**

Once the threshold is reached, all people targeted by the ritual receive a protection against the influence of Corrupted Places, Tainted Places, or Nests; while inside any such place, reduce the place's Potency by your Benediction rating for the purpose of dice pools and calculating the penalty inflicted by the Corrupting Presence Dread Power.

## Castigations

### Infernal Archives

Hell contains all sins and all atrocities in itself, every ugly part of humanity put in sharp relief. To gaze upon this litany of darkness would shatter the human soul. The Lucifuge, with their demonic bloodline, can provide a glimpse of this to someone, turning the effect to their advantage. This rite is somewhat infamous in the Conspiracy, for it tends to be more effective toward good people and Nobles in particular, which feels somewhat counterproductive to the Lucifuge's goal. Typically, they try to avoid using it against the Hopeful, unless they are confronted by Twilight Princesses. In practice, obviously, there are always particular cases...

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Action:** Contested

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Intimidation vs Resolve

**Rolls Result:**

**Dramatic Failure-** the Lucifuge sees hell, and is reminded of their own damnation. They lose the ability to spend willpower for the rest of the scene.

**Failure-** Nothing happens except the Lucifuge looks a bit silly

**Success-** the victim sees the greatest horrors of human history in a terrifying instant. On a human target, or any monster with an integrity equivalent, the victim loses the ability to spend willpower for the scene and will attempt to leave the area as soon as possible. This isn't an overwhelming compulsion- they won't jump through windows or leave a dying friend- but they will do so as soon as an opportunity arises.

Nobles, and people with the Beacon Merit or the Sworn Endowment, have a bigger reaction. As well as the above effects, they immediately suffer a Hyper-Empathy Roll. If the roll succeeds, it cannot be resolved until the end of this scene. To the Storyteller's discretion, some particularly empathetic, kind or innocent humans may have a similar reaction. If so, they make the roll using their integrity as a dice pool.

**Exceptional success-** Victims also lose the ability to gain willpower. If a Noble is affected, their hyper-empathy roll has a bonus equal to the hunter's castigation rating.

**Drawback** - Not all creatures fear sin. If used near a being that feeds on or embodies sin (creatures of the Darkness and the Inferno, definitely, others at the ST's discretion) the creature gains willpower equal to the hunter's castigation rating. If used *on* one of these creatures, it regains twice the hunter's castigation rating.

## Shield of Sins

The Lucifuge have the blood of demons in their veins, and just like them, they have power over sin. This includes the ability to tempt people into committing them, but also to shield them from others influences who would try to urge them toward it. By channeling Hell's authority, this rite allows the user to cast a false "shell" of sin around the innocents and the virtuous, making them appear as sinners in the eyes of forces who would want to corrupt or destroy them.

**Cost:** The Lucifuge must slightly cut himself, and place some of his blood on the intended subjects. This typically translates as 1 bashing damage per subject.

**Action:** Extended; each turn represents one minute of preparation. The threshold is 2 successes per person.

**Dice pool:** Resolve + Craft

**Dramatic Failure:** The hunter unwillingly corrupts the subjects with his blood. All characters who should have benefited from this rite immediately suffer a Breaking Point penalized by the hunter's dots in Castigation.

**Failure:** Nothing happens.

**Success:** The hunter makes progress toward invoking the rite.

**Exceptional Success:** Extraordinary progress is made.

Once the threshold is reached, all people targeted by this rite are now wrapped in a protection made of false "sins", causing them to appear as more corrupt than they really are and protecting against any corrupting influence. Any ability intended to gauge their Integrity Rating, such as Sense Integrity, will identify it as activation successes lower than it actually

is. Moreover, should they visit a Corrupted Place, its Dread Powers won't trigger even if they behave with good intent: the Darkness will be tricked into believing they are acting with some sinister ulterior motive. This effect works even on people touched by the Light, such as Sworns, Nobles or people with the Beacon merit- though it will immediately cease to work if Sworns and Nobles use their powers; the Darkness simply cannot be fooled into thinking someone would channel the Light with truly bad intentions.

At the Storyteller's discretion, this power can be used against any form of corrupting influence other than the Darkness.

### Damned wealth(2e update of a dream catchers)

The coffers of hell are rich and fat, fill with unimaginable wealth to tempt people. The seventh Generation can take a little out of the pot. Declare what you want, it could be precious metals and gems, fine wine, contracts for souls, false ID, anything you think that could gain an advantage, though the storyteller at any point can say no to anything you want to whip out

Cost: 1 dot of willpower AND one Point of AGG

Action:instant

Rolls:None

Gain what you called out for, if what you want is shot down by the storyteller, then gain the closest thing to what was called out (Paperwork that would prove someone guilty instead gives you the Code to the Vault were said Evidence is held, though the players might not know that)

## Elixirs

### Heart and Feather of Maat

In Egyptian mythology, Maat was the goddess of justice, in charge of judging how pure your heart was. By placing it on a balance and weighing it against her feather, she decided if you would be sent to the afterlife, or devoured by Ammit the Great Devourer. Of course, in real life, a person tends to have both good and evil in her heart. With this mixture, made from a pinch of sand recovered from the Dreamlands itself, a Lurker's necrotic blood, and various sacred oils, has the purpose of manipulating the metaphorical balance between good and evil inside the one who drinks it. This is a dangerous game, as one doesn't just change his whole personality without consequences, but the benefits coming with it are quite rewarding.

**Action:** Instant

**Roll Results:**

**Dramatic failure-** The character's two sides conflict inside his mind, tearing him apart and driving him insane. He immediately loses one dot of Integrity and gains the Madness condition.

**Failure-** nothing happens

**Success-** for the next 24 hours, the hunter has their inner light either put out or flared up. He must choose to apply one of the following effects:

- *More inner light-* The hunter has their dark side temporarily repressed- any attempt to socially exploit their vice or make them directly harm others automatically fail. They also get +2 to empathy rolls and rolls that heal people. Lastly, they become temporarily touched by the Light, gaining the Beacon Merit for free if they don't have it already, with all the benefits and drawbacks this involves.
- *Less inner light-* The hunter has their better nature erased. Any attempt to appeal to the hunter's virtue or sense of guilt and shame automatically fails. They also get +2 to intimidation and rolls to hurt people (just combat doesn't work- the attack has to be in some sense overly cruel or vicious). They count as a Spawn of Darkness, with all the appropriate benefits and weaknesses.

**Exceptional Success-** Once per scene, the hunter can switch which half of the power they are using.

## Relics

### Head of the Black Devil

The creature known as the Black Devil, nowadays believed to have some form of advanced Lurker, was a strange but very powerful monster who once lived deep inside a cavern, in some middle-eastern country. Tales tell it had the ability to drain its victims' will to live just by its stare, gradually turning them more and more depressed until they wouldn't even fight back as it devoured them. The fiend was eventually slain by a blind hero, who feigned being affected by its power, then, guided by his hearing, struck as it was getting close. Its severed head, however, retained part of its power, and as such the Aegis Kai Doru has been keeping it ever since. The hideous face's eyes usually are kept shut, but whenever they are open, all people who can see them start to suffer the creature's infamous power -- *especially* Nobles.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Intimidation vs Wits + Composure

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** 1 scene

**Roll Results:**

**Dramatic Failure:** The Hunter accidentally catches the head's gaze, losing 2 Willpower.

**Failure:** Nothing happens

**Success:** The hunter opens the head's eyes, unleashing his power; unless the target succeeds to contest the roll, he suffers the Beaten Down Tilt, and starts losing 1 Willpower every turn for the duration of the scene or until the hunter closes the head's eyes (which can be done as a reflexive action. Should the target fall to 0 Willpower as the result of this effect, he suffers the Soulless Condition as well.

Nobles are especially vulnerable to the Head's gaze, and suffer an Hyper Empathy roll upon seeing it. If you use the **Princess: the Hopeful** rules, you can have them lose Wisps instead of Willpower.

**Exceptional Success:** The target also suffers the Shaken Condition in addition of the normal effect.

### Shard of Storms

The Court of Storm sometimes incorporates among its ranks strange golem-like creatures, made from a bizarre mixture of flesh, clay and this green fire they seem to get their abilities from. Their body, when damaged, can leave behind fragments glowing with the destructive power inhabiting them. The Aegis Kai Doru has quickly learnt to recover these shards and incorporate them in their weapons, allowing them to channel this dangerous, but effective power.

**Cost:** 2 Lethal damages

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** 1 scene

**Benefit:** The shard can be incorporated in some fashion in a regular weapon, which can be either melee or long range. Whenever the hunter uses the weapon, he calls upon its power to coat its blade or projectiles into green, acidic fire. For the remainder of the scene, the weapon adds +1 fire damage to its Damage Modifier, and counts as a Bane against Spawns of the Darkness.

## Thaumatechnology

### Astral Implants

Princesses aren't the only creatures to hail from the Dreamlands. Every now and then, the Cheiron Group finds people suffering a strange case of possession, where an alien entity claiming to come from this place not only took over the person's body, but also expelled the original owner's soul, using some kind of pathway to send it to the mysterious plain. These people used to be of little interest to the company, but these last years, with the Group's growing interest and progress in dream travel technology, they have suddenly become really useful. After analyzing the strange doors these creatures use to enter the human mind, they have come up with these brain implants, which replicate the process in reverse, allowing an agent to temporarily send his soul to visit the dreamscapes.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice pool:** Wits + Empathy

**Benefit:** As long as he wears this implant, the hunter gains the one-dot version of the Dream Travel Merit for free. Moreover, by pronouncing a specific password (this only works if *he* is



the one saying it), he can trigger a mechanism inside his head to put him to sleep instantly, then expel his soul in dreams. This can be used to access both the Dreamlands and the Primordial Dream. A signal emitted from his brain makes sure he will be able to return to his body once whatever he came for is done.

**Roll Results:**

**Dramatic Failure:** The hunter gets assaulted by one of the Dreamlands' mysterious body-snatchers. He must immediately spend 1 Willpower and roll Resolve + Composure (without any bonus from the Willpower). If he succeeds on the roll, he wakes up. Otherwise, the creature steals his body and expels his soul to the Dreamlands. If his comrades notice the change, they might threaten the being into leaving the body until the character returns.

**Failure:** The hunter fails to fall asleep.

**Success:** The hunter awakens in the Dreamlands or the Primordial Dream, depending on the player's choice. He can stay here for as long as he wishes, and only needs an Instant action to return to his body.

**Exceptional Success:** Same as above, but the hunter can now return to his body as a reflexive action.

**Drawbacks:** The character isn't just dreaming, he is literally leaving his body behind, as a comatose empty shell. Nothing short of his soul returning to his body will awaken him. This means he might let his body starve to death without even realizing it, which would trap him in the Dreamlands forever. Moreover, while these implants do provide the means to travel to the Dreamlands, they offer no protection against the assimilating effect of the Gales.

## Disguise Splice

While the Cheiron Group has yet to figure out how to duplicate a Noble's transformed abilities due to them turning back to normal upon death, they have at least made some progress toward figuring out *how* they transform. Reasoning the transformation had to be triggered by something in the human form, their scientists studied the brains of the few dead subjects they were able to recover, and noticed small anomalies around the synapses. Figuring out the trigger must come from here, they proceeded to test it by implanting it in the head of various employees. Earlier results were unsuccessful, with subjects either being unaffected or falling to a catatonic state. Eventually, however, studies on living subjects allowed them to create a device to channel the ability, and a particularly young agent was able to make it work.

**Cost:** None or 1 Willpower (See below)

**Dicepool:** Integrity

**Duration:** 1 scene.

**Benefit:** This implant comes with a small device meant to serve as a trigger for it, usually disguised as a wristwatch or a cellphone. By using the device, the character can either roll Integrity as an Instant action, or Reflexively spend 1 Willpower, to change his appearance, either creating a new one entirely or copying someone else's. The change is physical and *not* an illusion; if, for example the character is male but "disguises" as female, his biology and gender will change to match, and things such as voices, lost limbs or size difference will

apply as well; even fingerprints will be adapted, which can come in handy to infiltrate a place. Once the character has chosen which appearance he takes when activating this implant, he has to keep it for the rest of a session-- he can turn back to his regular form at will and then assume this second form again, but he won't be able to use any other alternate form until the next session, as this will require a reprogramming.

In addition to the shapeshifting, the implant comes with two other benefits. One is that it is somehow able to imitate the Nobles' magical ability to not recognize the user; anyone getting clues on who your character is must roll Wits + Subterfuge vs your character Wits + Subterfuge, and cannot identify you unless he wins the roll. The other is that it improves the user's raw abilities in some way. When transforming, the character gains 1 dot in an Attribute of his choice, defined the moment this implant is taken. This bonus dot only applies while disguised, and not in human form.

**Drawback:** While Princesses are capable of summoning and discarding their Transformation trinkets at will, TCG Scientists have yet to reproduce this kind of magic; the device coming with this implant is entirely material, and can be lost, confiscated or destroyed (and it has a durability of 1 with a size of 1, so it's rather easy to damage). Getting a new one takes at least one month, and can get you in trouble due to how costly they are.

Moreover, for some strange reason, the implant seems to only work on people with some degree of idealism and mental health; a character needs an Integrity of at least 8 *or* the Virtuous Merit to use it (they can still have the implant without it, but it won't work) and cannot have the Vice-Ridden merit. If he suffers a Breaking Point and falls below 8 without having the Virtuous Merit, or acquires the Vice-Ridden merit somehow, the implants no longer work until he has recovered the proper level and/or loses the merit. The Cheiron Group typically uses agents with this for less amoral missions.

## Sanitation Worker's Collective's Endowment: Cleansings (•-•••••)

Cleansing is an Endowment Merit (**H:tV p. 67**) representing knowledge of the rites of the Sanitation Workers Collective. These rites combine western politics, eastern spirituality, a core seed of Noble magic, and practical experience to fight with the shadowy nature of the Darkness as well as the shadow of poverty that hangs over their own lives. A character with the Merit Endowments (Cleansings) at one dot can potentially know every Cleansing available, if they're willing to invest the time (and experience points) to learn them. The Endowments (Cleansing) Merit reflects how well the character can access that knowledge. All the Cleansing rites have different dice pools associated with them, but the character's Cleansings rating is always part of these pools. At character creation, a character has knowledge of one rite per dot of the Cleansing Merit. New Cleansing rites may be purchased at a cost of five experience points per rite. It takes one week to acquire a new Cleansing, and the rite can only be gained through intense teaching and contemplation on one's place in the world and the nature of their enemy.

## Errand Boy

The most important message is not always enough to make a privileged man leave the comforts of his office. For centuries, staff have been entrusted to carry secrets containing the fate of nations or items of intense value. And sometimes those items were never entrusted into their care.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower.

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice Pool:** None.

**Duration:** Scene.

Errand Boy affects one item in the Hunter's possession. For the remainder of the scene, the Hunter adds their Cleansing to any rolls made to convince others that the item belongs to them or that they have a legitimate reason for transporting it.

## Doorkeeper's Eye

The elite may own grand mansions and towering corporate offices, but it is the doorman welcoming the guests to the ball who knows who is present, who is not, and who was barred entry. Providing they have worked in a building (or an area like a park) for at least a week a Hunter of the Collective can focus their awareness of the area and summon the knowledge available to servants.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower.

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Cleansing - Size (Use Nest scale)

**Duration:** 1 Scene.

**Effect:** For each Success the Hunter may designate a person. If the designated person is in or enters the area, the Hunter immediately becomes aware of that fact. Once per activation per person, the character can pinpoint their location if they are in the affected area. Alternatively, instead of designating people, the Hunter may gain Unseen Sense (People who do not work or live here) for the duration of the scene.

## Invisible Servant

A member of the Sanitation Workers Collective knows that their masters see them as interchangeable, a fact that they draw upon and amplify to wipe away what makes them distinct in the minds of others for a time.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower.

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice Pool:** Stealth + Cleansing.

**Duration:** Scene.

### Roll Results:

**Dramatic Failure:** The character's focus only makes them more distinct. For the remainder of the scene, the character gains the Notoriety Condition.

**Failure:** The Character gains no benefits.

**Success:** The character becomes a nobody for the rest of the scene, slipping so fully into the role that no one gives a second glance. Later, others are hard-pressed to remember any details about them beyond "a janitor" or "the maid".

Unless a character is specifically looking for somebody in the hunter's role (usually to give them a task) or the Hunter is in a place where nobody in their job should be found then all eyes slide right off them. If a character fails a Perception - Hunter's Cleansing roll they pay no more attention to the Hunter than the shade of the carpet.

After the scene is over anyone trying to remember details about the character has her Intelligence + Composure roll penalized by the successes rolled. Failure indicates the witnesses don't remember him being there at all.

**Exceptional Success:** Failure on rolls to remember the character are upgraded to a Dramatic Failure.

## Spite-filled Strike

Most Hunters from the Collective face poverty and/or oppression for much of their lives, and are angry because of it. The Conspiracy teaches its members to focus that anger, lashing out at their enemies.

**Dice Pool:** Unrolled.

**Action:** Reflexive

**Cost:** 1 Willpower.

**Duration:** 1 attack.

**Effect:** The Hunter takes all the pain and frustrations of their deadly struggle and forces it upon a target they are attacking. The character activates this rite when making an Unarmed or Melee attack. The damage modifier for the attack is increased by the character's Cleansing, and the attack gains the Stun property. The attack also bypasses mundane Defence and Armor. However, any ability that provides mental protection, such as the Benediction Epipodian Safeguard, applies its relevant rating as Armor against the attack.

Releasing your pain, even for just a moment, can be quite a rush. If the hunter Risks Willpower to power their attack and scores a hit, they gain an additional point of Willpower over the usual benefits. A Hunter who fails a Breaking Point after a combat in which they used this power may gain the Addiction condition.

Achieving an Exceptional Success on an attack while in the presence of Nobility triggers the effects of Hyper-Empathy. Unlike normal, a Hunter can risk Willpower to achieve an Exceptional Success on three successes instead of five.

**Drawback:** Creatures of the Darkness feed and thrive on pain and suffering. So while a telepathic attack may hurt and stun them, the pain it contains can make them even stronger. A creature of Darkness hit by such an attack can roll to gain Shadows as if the character had failed a Breaking Point; use the character's current Integrity in place of new Integrity.

## Master's Ignorance

The Sanitation Worker's Committee says that ignorance is a luxury. A rich man does not need to understand the people beneath him but the poor must understand their employer and how to stay in his good graces lest they be cast out into the cold. By wearing this ignorance as a shroud the Hunters of the SWC become hard to predict.

**Cost:** 2 Willpower.

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice Pool:** None.

**Duration:** Scene.

**Effect:** For the remainder of the scene, the Hunter may add their dots in Cleansing to their Defense; whenever the Hunter cannot apply their Defense they retain a Defence of Cleansing alone.

This Endowment is only effective against creatures of the Darkness or characters of a higher social class. This takes into account culture and socialization. If an impoverished Hunter won the lottery (or more likely, used the power of Cleansings to rob somewhere) it would still apply against a Yale alumni still paying off his student debts. Master's Ignorance

counts as a supernatural mind-altering effect, and so can trigger a Clash of Wills or be subject to measures that protect against it.

### Servant's Passage

It would not do for a gentleman to let commoners offend the refined gaze of his guests. Many old buildings had dedicated stairs and corridors for the servants and even today you can find buildings with staff entrances kept away from the conference rooms where clients are entertained. The richest executive must give a key to his private office to the maid that cleans it and the man who fixes the alarms wears a blue collar. Nobody knows how to get around a building better than the people who work there.

This rite can be used on any mundane lock or alarm.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower.

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice Pool:** Larceny + Cleansing - Size (Use Nest Scale)

**Duration:** Scene.

**Dramatic Failure:** The alarm trips at the first opportunity, or windows and doors make an unignorable racket.

**Failure:** The Cleansing has no effect.

**Success:** An alarm is disabled for the remainder of the scene, and mundane locks become supernaturally responsive to the Hunter, who may make one Dexterity + Larceny or Wits + Computer roll per turn to crack the lock. The power provides no defense against showing up on or being recorded by cameras.

**Exceptional Success:** A disabled alarm becomes unfixable by mundane means for the remainder of the scene and a lock springs open at the Hunter's will.

### Sin-Eating Sawdust

A proper clean-up takes time, and sometimes the spill must be contained before it can be cleansed. With this ritual the Sanitation Workers Collective can focus their will to force a Nest into dormancy for a while so they can work in relative safety, or to create a forward outpost as they work to eradicate the Nest. Preparing an area for this ritual involves pouring quantities of cleaning fluids or an absorbent material such as sawdust over the area, as if cleaning up vomit.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents one minute of prayer and sweeping the material.

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Cleansing; Threshold = Nest's Corruption

**Duration:** Scene

**Roll Results:**

**Dramatic Failure:** Not only does the Nest remain and the ritual is failed, the scent of the material draws Spawn to its presence.

**Failure:** No progress is made towards completing the ritual.

**Success:** Progress is made towards completing the ritual. Once the threshold is reached, the Nest's corruption goes dormant. If the Nest is larger than a single room then only one room is forced into dormancy. The corruption is still there, but the Curses no longer apply their effects, characters visiting it no longer need to roll for Infection, and Spawn lose access to the Nest Travel ability, unless they have Shadow Walk (and even then, the restrictions apply as if there wasn't any Nest around). Once per scene however, subtract the Nest's Corruption level to this ritual's activation successes; when the successes reach 0, Sin-Eating Sawdust's effect ends.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to major progress being made, the ritual's effects will last for an additional scene, up to the Character's rank in Cleansing.

Trace the Truth

The executive hears much, but it's his secretary's responsibility to write it down. A character with this rite can ritually prepare a piece of blank paper, leaving it ready to have the truth seared into it. Preparing such a piece of paper takes five minutes, after which the rite is activated. When activating the ritual, the Hunter chooses whether the paper will record or copy. After the ritual is activated, a paper meant to record is left in the area of effect, while a paper meant to copy is placed near another piece of paper.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower.

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice Pool:** Expression + Cleansing

**Duration:** 1 Scene.

**Dramatic Failure:** A paper meant to record ignites as soon as a voice is heard. A paper meant to copy ignites as soon as the attempt to copy is made.

**Failure:** The rite fails.

**Success:** A paper meant to record will keep a written record of all spoken words in earshot for the remainder of the scene. The writing takes both sides of the paper; large

amounts of conversation can render the words too small to be legible. Speech in a language the character does not understand will be rendered phonetically. A paper meant to copy makes a black and white copy of the nearest paper in the room with writing on it; if the second paper is larger than the first, the remainder will be cropped out.

**Exceptional Success:** A paper meant to record will differentiate different voices with different colors and fonts; the Hunter who performed this rite will recognize people who they know. A paper meant to copy becomes an exact duplicate, completely indistinguishable from the sheet it copies (although if the second sheet is larger than the first, the remainder will still be cropped out).

### Worker's Constitution

**Cost:** 1 Willpower.

**Action:** Instant.

**Dice Pool:** Unrolled

**Duration:** 1 Scene.

While the wealthy may grow soft dining on fine cuts and sweet wines, those who work for them have no such luxury. The character adds their Cleansing to their Stamina when resisting toxins or deprivation. In addition, for the remainder of the day the Hunter may ignore a number of a Nest's curses equal to their dots in Cleansing and gains a form of Supernatural Tolerance equal to their dots in Cleansing that only protects against the Darkness.

### The People's Guard Endowment: Vox Populi

The Peasant's Guard is a fighter for the people, the common man and woman on the street who have no idea their own lives are trying to be put under the control of manipulative and dangerous royals who know nothing of the world as it is now. Raiding the Latin language for a title for their endowment, the Guard don't quite understand *what* it is, only that it works. There's time for figuring out the truth later, right now they need to fight their enemies on even terms.

Vox Populi evens the battlefield, allowing the people to fight as one, stripping the tyrants of the magic they hid behind, and allowing even their fallen brethren to fight beside them.

Unlike many endowments, Vox Populi is a *group* effort as much as an individual force. As expanded upon in their descriptions, the Vox Populi Endowments allow or can function as teamwork actions.

Three rough categories of Vox Populi's gifts have been worked out by the Guard; The People's Strength, the People's Soul, and the People's Will.



### **The People's Strength**

A member of the People's Guard focuses on his connection to their brethren, drawing upon their strength so that their brethren can in turn draw on theirs.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower, being in the presence of a Fellow member of the Guard

**DicePool:** n/a

**Action:** See below

**Duration:** One teamwork action

#### **Effects:**

You may perform any action as a Teamwork Action, designating yourself as the primary actor.

As long as you are the primary actor in a teamwork action, secondary actors count as members of the People's Guard.

If you are the secondary member in a teamwork action, the primary actor does not suffer unskilled penalties if you possess the relevant Skill.

If you are the secondary member in a teamwork action, you do not suffer unskilled penalties as long as the primary actor is not suffering unskilled penalties.

Joining a teamwork action requires spending the same actions as the primary actor. (For example, you cannot take an Instant action in the same round where the primary actor is performing an Instant action and you are participating as a secondary actor.) Attempting to break from the team before the action is complete causes the action to fail.

You may expend this Endowment after making a roll as a secondary actor in a teamwork action. If you do, add 1 success instead of 1 die to the primary actor's result for each success on your roll. Otherwise, the Endowment is expended at the end of the scene.

### **The People's Soul**

By focusing on the brotherhood of the People's Guard, a member can use the power of the Vox Populi to summon a spirit to fight for their cause. Members believe this spirit to be the soul of a fellow member who died for their cause; others aren't so certain, believing it to be an unrelated ghost, a psychic projection, or even a masquerading demon.

**Cost:** 5 Willpower, each paid by a different actor

**DicePool:** Presence + Empathy-Gauntlet

**Action:** extended Action(4 hours)

**Duration:** 1 week?

**Success:** The spirit is summoned. The spirit is created using the "Brief Nightmares" rules (CofD Pg. 143-144). One or two successes summons a Minion-level spirit. Three or four successes summons a Horde-level spirit. Use the following details:

-Concept: Vengeful Spirit.

-Aspiration: Topple the aristocracy. ("Aristocracy" is defined broadly here. Any character outside of the actors that strikes the spirit as elitist, upper-class, establishmentarian, or any combination of the three is likely to be a target.)

-Best die pools: Pummeling, bringing down buildings.

-Worst die pools: Diplomacy, calming people down.

-Dread Powers: From the pool of: Gremlin, Home Ground (Mass protests, uprisings, or revolts), Hunter's Senses (In this case, choose before Rite), Know Soul, Madness and Terror, Natural Terror (Fists), any of the following Numena: Aggressive Meme (Bring down the Establishment), Awe, Firestarter, Implant Mission (Bring down the Establishment) Each actor, no matter how well it goes, gains the Shaken (CofD, p. 290), Spooked (CofD, p. 291), or is subject to another appropriate Condition at Storyteller discretion

**Exceptional:** The spirit summoned is a Lone Terror. The primary actor takes the Inspired Condition; relating to demolition or any attacks against the aristocracy.

**Failure:** No spirit is summoned.

**Dramatic:** The spirit is summoned, but uncontrollable. Count each actor as a success. The summoned spirit considers the actors "insufficiently zealous" and counts them among the aristocracy.

### **The People's Will**

The People's Guard bands together, restraining the powers of those who would use their powers to rule others and cutting them down to size.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower, each paid by a different actor

**DicePool:** Resolve + Intimidation - Supernatural Tolerance

**Range:** 10\*Actors in feet.

**Action:** Instant Action, Teamwork

**Duration:** One scene

### **Roll Results:**

**Success:** Any attempt by the targeted monster to use a Dread Power (or other Supernatural abilities if your storytellers opens a splat book) suffers a penalty equal to the number of successes on this roll (maximum -5). Further successful rolls can add to this penalty but cannot take it past the maximum. The effects last until the Endowment is expended at the end of the scene. A monster suffering the effects of Supernatural Stocks may take an Instant action and roll Resolve + Composure; success expends the Endowment and ends its effects. If any actor shows mercy or compassion to the monster, or assists the monster in any way, the Endowment is expended and the actor takes the Beaten Down Tilt.

**Exceptional:** The monster also takes the Stunned Tilt.

**Failure:** The monster is not affected.

**Dramatic:** All actors suffer a Breaking Point.

### **The People's Blood**

The People's Will shall never be crushed as long as a single one stands.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower paid by each actor, for each actor

**DicePool:** n/a

**Action:** Instant Action

**Duration:** One scene

Whenever another member of the People's Guard would fill their last Health box in Lethal or Bashing damage, other members can take that box of damage in their place.

(Might makes it so damage is spread equally through the group like your in a group of four and one guy takes 4 lethal, everyone instead takes one lethal )

### **The Peoples' Bonds**

While mortal aristocrats and elites look down upon and trample the common man with superior resources, Monsters possess abilities and talents far beyond human. They think this makes them better. But the strength of 10 men means little when 10 brothers and sisters hold down each arm, while another silences its boasts.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower paid by each actor

**DicePool:** n/a

**Range:** 10\*Actors in feet.

**Action:** Instant Action

**Duration:** one scene

Each actor chooses either an Attribute or skill they want to lower, lower it by one, but also their own Att/Skill by one. However it only is the case for the Att or Skill you choose to lower, so if your lowering Strength and another lowering brawl any strength rolls would be rolled if he had one less strength, but brawl would be unaffected. This include if people lowering a the same Att or skill, like you don't treat your strength as 2 lower cause you and a buddy are focusing strength, you both just treat your strength as one lower

### **Sidebar: What *is* The People's Will?**

No one in the Guard is exactly a mystic or occultist on the level they would need to figure out what exactly their endowment is. All they know is that it's something special, and something they could use to change the world for the better. So, as the storyteller, you have options.

### **1: It's the Darkness**

The Darkness is a force, and it's somehow sentient. Everything else pretty much flies right out the window when it comes to actually understanding this stuff. What everyone knows for sure is that the Darkness can stop magic in action just by being present, making it misfire horribly and taking away a tool that many creatures rely on out of necessity.

## **2: It's a Lost Relic**

Some relics are imbued with magic, why wouldn't there be some that are a bane to magic? The Guard found a relic in the palace, a tool that the royal was hoping to bring to her queen in an attempt to possibly use it to save Alhambra. The location is a secret, but what is for sure is that its power is felt across the whole of the Guard.

## **3: It's Gestalt Energy**

Some fringe theories postulate that all of mankind has a collective psychic consciousness, capable of creating and destroying when a large-enough group of people agree on something as being "real", or when an emotional drive is unified among a group of people. There's nothing quite "magical" about the People's Will, but it certainly is unknown by the rest of the world. That doesn't matter to the Egalitarians, what does is that it works against the royals.

## **4: It's Related to Witches**

Everyone knows that the most powerful magic users are witches, or at least they're the most numerous and dangerous. Maybe they were working on something to stop an enemy group of witches, and things went haywire. Their creation turned on them, and unable to stop it the group was unable to tell their fellows about it. The royal found it, but didn't know how to activate it. Of course, that implies that the Guard were able to find a way to make it work.

## **5: Fucked if We Know**

Let's face facts; in this world things are just messed up. Whatever the People's Will is, it isn't something that just appeared one day because someone wanted it to. More likely, it was something that someone didn't want to see the light of day ever again. Of course, in the middle of revolution nothing stands in your way.

## **Magisters of the Economie Endowment: Usurpation (•+)**

The Magisters of the Economie broker with otherworldly dream entities in order to steal the magical powers of the Nobility and brainwash humans. Note that there is NO upper limit of dots that can be invested in this Endowment.

A Magister of the Economie with Usurpation may subject a Noble to the Rite of Somnus. Past rites involved glass coffins and golden chains; over the years magisters have refined

their techniques and clarified their contracts. Modern Magisters only need something symbolic of royalty and restraint and often use off the shelf solutions such as four poster princess beds and medical machinery. The Rite takes a number of days equal to the Noble's Willpower and if successful, grants the Magister 5 Dread Power Dots possessed by the Noble. Increasing a Dot in this Endowment requires capturing an additional Noble. Characters with Potency other than Inner Light cannot gain Dread Powers through the Rite, although it still functions in keeping Nobles asleep.

Additionally, a Magister with no Potency other than Inner Light who has captured at least one Noble gains the following **adjusted** benefits, **functioning exactly as described**:

- **Transformation:** Mechanically, treat as a 1-dot version of Strange Form (**Hunter the Vigil, p.282**). It costs no Willpower by default, but can be done reflexively without a roll by spending 1 Willpower. The Magister requires at least one Usurped Noble's Transformation trinket. Unlike most variants of Strange Form, this transformation keeps a human-looking appearance.
- **Forcefield:** The Magister can reflexively spend 1 Willpower to downgrade damage: Aggravated becomes lethal, lethal becomes bashing, and bashing is reduced to a single damage no matter how many successes the attack roll got. This ability can only be accessed while Transformed.
- **Dual Identity:** Some strange magic protects a Magister's identity, making it near impossible to connect the Magister's two identities as the same person. People who saw a Magister in her two forms cannot recognize her, even if her voice, face and mannerisms remain the same. Viewing a Magister's transformation directly negates this benefit. Otherwise, direct evidence (such as finding mundane ID on the Magister) allows for a roll of Wits + Empathy, contested by the Magister's Manipulation + Subterfuge; winning this roll and getting an Exceptional Success grants the Informed Condition. Without such direct evidence, uncovering a Magister's mundane identity (or vice versa) is an Investigation (CofD pg. 77-81); the number of Clues needed should not be less than the higher of the Magister's Manipulation or Subterfuge.

When making a Hyper-Empathy Roll, a Magister reduces the dice pool by their dots in Usurpation. A Magister who reaches Integrity 0 becomes a warped intersection of Human Darkness and Hope's Light. They become a Slasher, losing all benefits of Usurpation but keeping the Dual Identity; their "transformed" state often manifests the Dread Powers they once took from the Nobles they kept captive.

A Magister may keep any number of Nobles that they have subjected to the Rite. Each Noble must be kept alive but sleeping; if the Noble awakens or dies, the benefit gained from them is revoked. This is equivalent to keeping a coma patient alive; a Magister with access to modern medicine and the right magic can keep a Noble slumbering for months if not years. Additionally, the Magister must keep the Transformation Object of one of these slumbering Nobles on them, using it as their own Transformation Object (though its form is altered to match the Magister's own self-image); the Transformation Objects of other captive Nobles are also altered, integrating themselves into the Magister's Heraldry. A Magister's Heraldry

isn't innately deformed, but based as it is on the Magister's own view of their ideal self (and often containing the symbols of comatose Nobles), it's likely to trip subconscious red flags in others who know what to look for.

Once a Magister has turned over at least one Noble to the Wardens, they earn the privilege of subjecting mortals to the Rite of Somnus. A normal person subjected to the Rite falls apart and has their identity rewritten in little more than their Willpower in days. The Warden in the Dream Lands, granted power and permission from the Rite of Somnus, has the power to send the newly-brainwashed "Dreamlander" back into their human body.

Such brainwashed people have levels of the Galemark Condition equal to their Willpower. Give a personality built this way a number of dots equal to Usurpation - With these dots, assign any combination of the following Merits: Anonymity, Retainer, Staff (1 Dot only), and True Friend. For example, a Magister with 4 dots in Usurpation may designate one of these personalities as their 1-dot Staff with True Friend, or as their 2-dot Retainer with 2 dots in Anonymity, and so on. These personalities are built in the Dreamlands; they may be competent and retain their basic skills and some memories, but tend to be out of touch with the modern world, with many blank or altered spots in their past. Use of the Rite on characters with Supernatural Endowments or Supernatural Merits (such as Sworn or Beacons) suppresses the effects of those Supernatural Merits and Supernatural Endowments until the brainwashing is undone.

Attempts to use the Rite of Somnus on a character with Potency other than Inner Light almost always fail: other supernatural creatures lack connection to the Dreamlands, and their own powers protect them against the Warden's influence. There are stories about particularly unconscious (figuratively at first, later quite literally) Magisters who tried to use the Rite on Changelings and Beasts, only for the monsters to easily escape and retaliate by plaguing their usurpers with horrible nightmares.

The Rite of Somnus can be interrupted by waking the sleeper before the last Galemark takes hold; this can be accomplished through lethal damage to the sleeper. Once it is complete, however, a Magister cannot simply choose to end the Rite's effects, nor do the Rite's effects end upon the Magister's death. Without outside intervention, a brainwashed personality will go to the Dreamlands when they sleep and a Noble will remain slumbering, maintaining the Galemarks. The most direct way to end the Rite's effects is to clear at least one Galemark from the victim; for Nobles, this means locating them in the Dreamlands. Even after awakening, a Noble must reclaim their Transformation Object to fully regain their power. Other supernatural methods may be used to force a Noble awake, per ST discretion.

- **Sidebar: "So, you want to infiltrate a Nakama..."**

For reasons good or bad, a player Magister may work alongside a player Noble. In crossover games, Magisters are generated as Hunters, ALWAYS use the Hunter mechanics presented here and the main Hunter rulebook, even if Princess is being used as Core. Otherwise it gets complicated FAST. Trust us, we tried. Any differences are presumed to be a boon or consequence of the Rite of Somnus.

## New Tactics

### Beacon of Hope

**Prerequisite:** (All participant) Resolve 2, Composure 2, (primary actor) Presence 3, Expression 1

**Requires:** 3

**Primary Dice pool:** Presence + Expression

**Secondary Dice pools:** Resolve + Composure

**Description:** Often mockingly referred to as the "Bat Signal", this tactic solely involves the Hunters putting out a noticeable coded message to an unidentified Noble in the area for assistance. This is primarily used when the Hunter Cell realizes they're outmatched by the supernatural force they fight against and are either unable to contact the Noble for a more formal request for assistance, when the Cell is too prideful or prejudiced to ask so instead they rely upon plausibly deniable assistance from an unknown Noble, or (most dastardly) when the Cell wants to set a trap for the Noble themselves. Success results in a Noble of the Storyteller's choosing arriving at either a critical moment of a combat encounter, or for the Hunter's trap. The danger, of course, is even when the call is genuine and sincere, there is no guarantee which Noble shows up, or even if they will take the Hunter's side of the fight.

**Organizations:** Network Zero and the Light Company makes heavy use of this Tactic, employing it whenever they need to transmit information to a Noble. The Lucifuge, and cells from the Malleus Maleficarum or the Union who keep good relationships with the Hopeful, also occasionally make use of it. More sinisterly, the People's Guard and Magister of Economie have both used it on occasion to ambush them.

### Candlelight Vigil

**Prerequisite:** (all participants) Resolve 2, Composure 2 (secondary actor) Stamina 2, Athletic 2, Brawl or Weaponry 2 (primary actor) Presence 3, Socialize 3

**Requires:** 3; 4 or more bestow a +1 to the primary actor's roll. 8 or more bestows a +2.

**Primary Dice pool:** Presence + Socialize

**Secondary Dice pools:** Stamina + Athletic

**Description:** Some Hunters and occultists become painfully aware of how certain locations take on a life of their own under often horrific circumstances. Hauntings, Possessions, and especially Nests can be created when pain, suffering, or hate grows to a boiling point and a location becomes a corrupted creature all its own. This is where this Tactic owes its origins, for sometimes the only way to fight such horrific tragedy is with love, understanding, and closure. All of which is few and far between amongst those who take up the Hunter's Vigil... but humans may use another kind of Vigil to give the Hunter's just the right kind of power

they need. Often used by religious or community driven Cells, this Tactic calls upon the local or regional community to gather and either pay their respects or mourn a specific person or event that's connected to a spiritually poisonous location. The community puts forth its faith, sorrow, or friendship and it weakens the tainted emotions that many haunted locations feed upon. While the Candlelit Vigil might not be enough to dispel the corruption from the location, having so many people sending forth their own positive emotions often gives the cell just the opening they need to move in and either properly purify it or at least destroy the dark-beating heart that gives foul life to the evil of the place.

The secondary actor's role here is to walk around the Nest and keep the Spawns or similar monsters in check, making sure they won't attack the community or make them flee. Meanwhile, the primary actor supervises the ceremony, encouraging people to pay their due and making sure as many people as possible are sincere about it. Each success marks off one Hold Box of the Nest, pretty much the way an extended action would with the "Fight off the sins" method. If used against another form of haunting, you can instead use this Tactic as an advanced Exorcism or Abjuration, with similar effects.

**Organization:** The Union, the Malleus Maleficarum and the Long Night all use this Tactic on a regular basis, as they have the best means to assemble the needed community for this kind of task. The Star of Bethlehem also likes to employ it, as it makes for an efficient way to deal with a Nest while getting as few people hurt as possible.

## Checkmate Firing Pattern

**Requires:** 3; each participant above 3 grants a +1 bonus to the primary actor's dice pool

**Primary Dice pool:** Dex + Firearms - Modified Defense (see below)

**Secondary Dice Pool:** Dex + Firearms

**Description:** Many Princesses, as well as some Spawns, Vampires, Werewolves and Fairies are more than capable of dodging bullets as easily as close-range weapons. This is quite problematic, as many hunters cannot hope to keep up as soon as they get in close combat. To evade this issue, some of them have developed a strategy to counter this ability; by having multiple cellmates coordinate to shoot just in the right areas, you can ensure that, no matter where the enemy moves, a bullet will hit him.

This Tactic can be used against any opponent capable of using Defense against Firearms, such as a Princess with Dance Between the Bullets or a Werewolf in a hybrid form. Roll the Secondary Actors' Dice pools first without applying Defense; they do not inflict damage, but each success on their rolls allows the Primary actor to ignore 1 point of the target's Defense, until said Defense is reduced to 0. This does not grant you bonus on the roll if the successes exceed the target's Defense.



## Divide and Conquer

**Prerequisite:** (all participants) Resolve 2, (secondary actors) Stamina 2, Athletic 3, (primary actor) Wits 3

**Requires:** 3; each participant above 3 grants a +1 bonus to the primary actor's dice pool

**Primary Dice pool:** Wits + Subterfuge

**Secondary Dice pools:** Stamina + Athletic

**Description:** Hunters who survived enough confrontations with intelligent Spawns capable of controlling Lurkers have come to realize their control over their repulsive servants tend to wear out after a while away from them. This Tactic was invented to take advantage of this weakness. Using part of their members as willing baits, the Cell tries its best to lure the creatures as far away as possible from their masters, then resort to traps and ambush to make sure he won't be able to approach them until the effect of his power ceases. This is risky, as a Spawn powerful enough to possess such an ability rarely is harmless, but when used well, this can break an organized force of Spawns into small groups of mindless monsters much easier to dispose of.

This Tactic is meant to be used against Spawns with the Monster Lord Dread Power, and works in two phases; during the first one, the hunters split up, with the secondary actors doing their best to attract the Lurkers' attention and bring them out of range of their master's power. This part is particularly risky, as they take the risk of having the monsters catch up with them; any secondary actor who fails his roll ends up having to fight the targeted Lurkers. Fortunately, a larger number of hunters can lessen this problem: the number of Lurkers he has to fight is divided by the number of secondary actors taking part in this Tactic.

For the second phase, the primary actor confronts the Lurkers' master if he shows up, and does everything he can to prevent him from getting to his minions, hopefully with the help from any secondary actor who could make it back. Each success on the primary actor's roll means the Spawn is held back for one hour; if he's held back long enough for Monster Lord to wear off, he loses his control over his Lurkers.

This Tactic is equally effective against any creature using some form of mind control or compelling effect to keep a hold over its minions, as long as you can keep them away for the needed time, such as vampire thralls, or people under the effect of a mad scientist's mind control device. If the mind manipulating power's effect is based on range rather than duration, replace the hours gained for each success by yards - that is, as long as hunters are *aware* of the difference; they cannot adapt their Tactic if they do not realize it.

**Organizations:** #Ammit and the Light Company both regularly make use of this Tactic in their struggle against the Darkness, the former to isolate their opponents and the latter to open the Nobles' path to the head Spawns. Task Force VALKYRIE and the Union also are

adept to it, as this usually makes it easier to eliminate Darkness incursions while wasting as little resources as possible.

## The Knight of Mirrors

**Prerequisite:** (Primary Actor) Presence 3, Persuasion 2, (Secondary actors) Intelligence 2, Expression 3

**Requires:** 3

**Primary Dice pool:** Presence + Persuasion (contested by the Princess' Manipulation + Empathy)

**Secondary Dice pools:** Intelligence + Expression - highest Resolve in the targeted group.

**Description:** Otherwise known as Empath Preservation Tactics or the "Don Quixote Tactic", this technique is an improved version of the methods that led to the disastrous attempt to rid one of the Hopeful of their self-destructive delusions about a "Purpose on Earth." While the first time it was used led to the revelation about what a Noble becomes when their delusions progress to psychosis, it has since been modified by the Star of Bethlehem in order to at least ground the Noble's delusions about saving the world with the very real danger and trauma that fighting the supernaturals brings. This tactic is risky, and difficult because in order for it to succeed the Hunters will need to discover a Noble's true identity, and convince a group close to the Noble (usually their family and/or best friends) that this revelation is true (this is a task in and of itself, likely requiring at least the same evidence as required to uncover the Noble's true identity if not more) while also confronting the Noble themselves. If successful, then the Noble's Empathic powers will turn against her as their desire to end the suffering of others will conflict with their family and friends' desire for their loved one to not be in danger any more or risk their lives for their sake. While this doesn't necessarily take away a Noble's powers, if successful it will weaken them enough that they won't be able to endanger themselves for a good deal of time. And that just might be what the Hunter needs in order to either capture the Noble themselves, or target and eliminate the supernatural threat that the Noble themselves were going to confront.

While under the effect of this Tactic, the targeted Noble treats her Integrity as if it was reduced by this Tactic's activation successes when trying to Transform. This doesn't actually reduce her Integrity in all other aspects; she is still as sane as she usually is otherwise, she just has a harder time transforming, which cuts her access to most of her powers. Moreover, she cannot spend Willpower to transform without a roll, and trying to do her duties as a Noble against the will of her family or relatives now triggers Hyper-Empathy.

The effects last one week, two weeks on an exceptional success. Of course, it's useless against the few Nobles whose loved ones *already* know and approve of their activities.

**Organizations:** As noted above, this is the Star of Bethlehem's signature Tactic, and practically always their first recourse when trying to convince their Noble children to give up their activities. Character Risk Analysis and Task Force VALKYRIE also made it their favourite method when dealing with the Hopeful, as this allows them to keep the Hopeful in check without all the troubles killing them would bring.

## Sekhmet's Roar

**Prerequisite:** (All participants): Computer 2, Intelligence 2, (primary actor) Expression 2, Manipulation 2

**Requires:** 3

**Primary Dice pool:** Manipulation + Expression

**Secondary Dice pools:** Intelligence + Computer

**Description:** Only recently developed with the rise of the Internet, this Tactic takes full advantage of the web in order to destroy the public image of monsters who rely on support from communities to protect themselves. In order to accomplish this, at least two members must do some psychological profiling on a targeted group, while the others then start seeding memes, reports, and “fake news” designed to trigger said group’s rage-button.

You can apply the success either as a social penalty to the targeted group or monsters, or temporarily remove a number of dots equal to the success in one of the target’s Social merits the Cell is aware of. You have to decide which effect you wish to apply before using the Tactic.

**Organizations:** This is #Ammit’s signature Tactic, and their typical approach when dealing with Apophites. Network Zero also makes frequent use of it, as their skills with computers make them fit for it. Finally, the Cheiron Group has been known to employ it on the rare opportunities their advocates weren’t enough.

## Sidebar: The Queens and the Darkness

*“Well, that is all nicely put, but that still doesn’t answer your question of “how powerful is a Queen?”*

*Honestly, that’s deliberate. Giving direct stats of a Queen turns them from plot points into objectives. Of the “and then we killed the Queen of (\*)” kind, which we want to avoid. And yet people want to know how a Queen relates to her Invocation, and what powers she may call upon when defending herself and her subjects....*

*We’re simply not going to give you more than a few guidelines. Even if you decide Queens can die, a Queen is very powerful, and anything short of a highly experienced Nakama is only going to make her laugh, rather than be a credible threat. A Queen’s power is also strongly*

*related to her Invocation, and building her powerset to fit the philosophy of the Invocation itself would be a good idea. The setting breaking powers shown in the back stories of some of the Queens are probably best handled as major pieces of the plot instead of Charms.”*

-Princess: the Hopeful, Vocation Version, 358

*“Entering the Dark World is almost suicide for most things.... Mortals are doomed. But sometimes the Nobility find themselves in this place, and before the mechanics are dealt with, a few points should be noted.*

*Firstly, the Dark World is dangerous. This has been said before, but it bears repeating. It is not the Dreamlands which, for all that they were intended as a trap, have an allure and an elegance and a certain safety to them.... In the Dark World, everything, without exception, wants you dead. Even the world will seem to contort to kill a Noble within it, roads collapsing and buildings crumbling on their heads. Away from a Taint-lightened area, the entire World is more Tainted than anywhere but the most-corrupted places on Earth....*

*Why would anyone go there? That’s a very good question. Some among the Enlightened hold that there is never a good reason to go there. Ever.”*

-Princess: the Hopeful, Dream Version, 246

*“In short, no story arc should pit the hunters against foes they are unable (and will continue being unable) to harm in any way. Through a chronicle, and even sometimes during a scene, the hunters should somehow have the capacity to do some harm to their enemies. If the antagonist is much too powerful for the cell (and many are likely to be just that — at least at first), then even minor harm can feel like a decent victory.”*

-Hunter: the Vigil, Corebook 264

What happens when you put the antagonists (or at least the higher Powers That Be) of a more fantastic setting into a more horrific one?

In both versions of **Princess: the Hopeful** the Queens, the powers behind the Nobility and the Sworn, have undefined but incredible power. Regicide and replacement are both acknowledged but far-away possibilities, and although the Storyteller is given great leeway the concept of defeating a Queen is generally avoided as an objective.

In both versions of the game, the Dark World from which the creatures of Darkness spring is an ancient eldritch location. It is evil incarnate, and no plausible way of destroying it is presented.

In **Hunter: the Vigil**, how to handle both will likely be more pressing matters of consideration. Several of the Compacts and Conspiracies have defeating the Queens as a possible objective, and at least one has it as their defining objective. The Darkness itself will count most Hunters among its enemies, and many groups may one day consider taking the fight to the Dark World itself. A Storyteller should discuss with their table if such things should be possible (or at the least, if the players can play as if they are possible without causing too major a disruption to the Chronicle). And if your table includes Sworn or Nobles

for whatever reason, the conversations become even more pressing.

Storytellers should keep in mind that defeating the Queens is more than sweeping the Nobles away before the climactic battle. The five Radiant Queens are deep in the Dreamlands, reigning in their heavily defended kingdoms and defended by countless Dreamlanders. One Chronicle may focus on infiltrating the kingdoms until the perfect opportunity arises. Another may focus on researchers or occultists trying to sever the connections to the Dreamlands all together. The other Queens will be more complex. The Queen of Tears hides her Kingdom in the Dark World, while the Queen of Storms rages against the Dark World as an eternal living storm. And the Queen of Mirrors? Who's to say what's up with her? Still, that may not necessarily mean that they are unbeatable.

Storytellers experienced in the World of Darkness may consider analogies to the God-Machine. The Queens are incredibly powerful, but they are not free to act on their own. They need the Nobles and Sworn as their agents to influence our world. If the Nobles are convinced with words or turned away with deception or violence, their plans will be set back. Hunters can save this community from their influence, or save that complex from being burned down on a Noble's judgment alone. As they rack up these small victories, they learn more and become more effective at predicting and preventing the Nobles' plots. Perhaps when the time comes to bring the fight to the kingdom, they'll be ready for it.

The Dark World poses its own issues in a crossover game. In **Princess: the Hopeful** it is a part of the setting, the eternal conflict between good and evil made tangible. Will Hunters accept such a place? Will they accept that any major incursions are doomed? Should your players? Perhaps a war against the Darkness too should focus on the small victories. The monsters are a never-ending threat, yes, but perhaps the Hunters can come to peace with that, saving a town with the knowledge that it will happen again somewhere else, and they must be ready when it does. But perhaps they can do better, not only entering the Dark World but surviving to do it again. Perhaps they find a way to defeat the threat altogether, they and their companions sealing off or burning off the Dark World once and for all.

If you change something, what then? Suppose a Queen falls. Will their followers lose their power or gain the ferocious zeal of vengeance that makes them even more dangerous? Suppose there is a way to destroy the Dark World, or at least to seal every Nest. Will it be a true victory? Will the threat be shifted to cults desperate to let Darkness be part of the world again? Or will the struggle live in every human heart, each holding in their own Darkness before the monster inside lashes out?

You shouldn't take away all surprise from a campaign, and you shouldn't make things too easy for your players; remember that "Mystery and horror create the Vigil, and they spur it on ceaselessly." (**H:tV Corebook 260**). But setting guidelines that everyone can agree to and helping your players understand what you're putting them up against and what they can be reasonably be expected to accomplish can help keep them and their characters going even when things are at their darkest so that they can make it to the other side (or at least survive

another day).

*“...you can’t shut out their pain - or their joy. Those rare moments of beauty and happiness are what make the fight worth it. You need to protect that, because without those occasions of hope, life is not worth living. Once your eyes are open to that fact, it’s hard to shut them again.... The darkness, the shadows, the occult - it is like Pandora’s Box. In it might lay evils we can’t imagine. But slam the lid too fast and you lock away Hope forever.”*

-Princess: the Hopeful, Dream 2-3, Vocation VIII

*“The Vigil isn’t hopeless. It’s certainly hard, and no one would argue that walk away alive and happy into a healthy retirement, but it’s not a path devoid of hope... Hunters can make a difference. They leave an impact through their work, both in the immediacy of the nightly hunt, and in the sense of a greater legacy.”*

-Hunter: the Vigil, Corebook 263

## Sample Quotes, Pictures and Fictions

If you have any ideas for fictions and Quotes, feel free to write them down here AND MARK YOUR STUFF

### Network Zero

Zane was an avid member of the Secret Frequency, readily posting drone-caught photos of his latest pet project on his facebook page. His newest evidence of the supernatural was what others on the frequency called Paladins, and he was inclined to agree with them. He was a very handsome man (no, he wasn’t jealous!) with blonde hair, blue eyes, and the biggest frickin’ sword Zane had ever seen. Not to mention the giant armor and blue cape- not that it seemed to hinder the man from fighting what the others called Darkspawn. He had termed the guy the Blue Knight for lack of a better name. However, today all he could do was blankly stare at his facebook page. His best friend, John, had just died in a gas explosion with his entire family. They did everything together, and all he had left of John was the photos he had posted. He stared into the deep blue eyes of his grinning friend- that sunny grin he would never see again. “You know, I must really thank you, Zane.” That snobbish voice sent a jolt up Zane’s spine. He whirled his chair around, and there standing in his room was Laurie, the self-proclaimed Alpha Bitch of the campus’ main sorority. And she was grinning like a cat that just caught a mouse. “Laurie?!” How did she get in here?! His exclamation only made her grin wider. “If you hadn’t posted both their photos I would never have figured out their connection.” Her grin grew bigger and bigger- and soon her mouth engulfed her face like some kind of

grotesque leech. The Darkspawn that was Laurie launched herself at him. And it was then that Zane suddenly realized: The Blue Knight's secret identity was- CRUNCH

### The Long Night

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When Reverend Andrew heard one of the choir boy's claims, he dismissed them as some sort of prank. True, the Father did use His Angels to do His work, but to be the reincarnation of one? Such childishness! But when the boy claimed that he could provide proof, he was intrigued. After Mass one Sunday, the two met in his office. "Will you swear to not tell a soul who I really am?" It was such an odd request. But considering the works of the Enemy's servants... "As God as my witness, I will not." The boy took a Rosary out of his pocket. Its beads were blue, a color for hope. Before Andrew's eyes, a burst of golden light surrounded the boy- and instantly, in his place, was a glowing figure draped in white robes. That day stuck forever in Andrew's memory. It was the day he met his first Angel.

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Harron was practically catatonic with disbelief. The labs of Parasol Pediatrics - a company that, through a long line of shells and fronts, was connected to the Cheiron Group just enough to be pulled on its strings, but distant enough that nobody outside the Group would associate one with the other - was ransacked. No, "ransacked" is too light a word; **obliterated** was more suitable, as nearly every wall was pulverized to shattered bricks and dusty plaster, every holding cell adding to the oceans of broken glass lining the corridors. Several lower-level research subjects have already been recaptured, but this location wouldn't be fit to imprison termites, meaning they'll all have to be relocated to other Cheiron-associated facilities. All facilities that, Harron's mind grimly noted, belonged to Harron's personal rivals, who were all too eager to drop trouh right on his head while he was already drowning under a tsunami of shit.

The real disasters were that "Subject Nauta Nihil" - formerly a Marine Biology student that R&D was attempting to pump for the specs of a water cannon that could scrub away not just dirt and blood stains, but melt any creature she referred to as "Darkspawn" to puddles of sludge - was not among the recaptured subjects. There was no trace of her after having been spirited through the facility's connection to the sewer system by a gaggle of what, for the life of Harron, could only be described as "Roach Exterminators with AK-74s", their pesticide respirators obscuring their faces from the surveillance cameras, all while gunning down security personnel and feral research subjects alike. But the real insult upon all the copious injuries was what the masked handymen had done to "Subject Theodora" - a captured "Cataphractoi" extracted in the same operation as "Subject N.N.", the crown jewel of Harron's experimental collection, and what was sure to get him invited to The Board itself. And those blue-collared **cunts** wiped every trace of it from the Earth; every note, photo or hard drive of research stolen

or destroyed, not a cell remained to put under a petri dish - nothing was left but the smell of chloride and what could only be described as “Japanese scented candles”.

Harron looked down, the Glock held in a trembling hand. He already got the email; from The Board itself, alright, but not an invite to the table. No, it was chiding him for “security containment protocol failures”; the most obvious with the sewer connection, despite necessary for waste disposal, being improperly guarded. But they were also going on about an “inability to properly vet all employees”, stating that the only way they could have found the sewer entrance, and could’ve popped all the holding cells loose so that most of the security was too busy trying to recapture the escaped subjects to stop the intruders, was if someone was feeding them intel for at least six months, if not longer. The fact that Harron didn’t just get beat by a pack of high school dropouts unfit to polish his shoes, but that he had one of those deadbeats on his **staff**, none the wiser to their real plan...

Harron raised the Glock to his temple. He knew “Subject Theodora” used to be a Cheiron executive as well, who jumped out of her 34th-floor office window rather than face being “reassigned” after she failed to prevent a dossier exposing quite a number of Cheiron Group’s financial improprieties to the press. The only ones who had access to the heavily guarded room being herself, and the maid she didn’t bat one eye at; not until she found her safe cracked open wide, a single feather duster showing the price of presumption.

As Harron pulled the trigger, the second-to-last-thing entering his head was the idle thought of whether he’d become a Cataphractoi, and if it would end up a part of someone else’s research portfolio.

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(Draft of Star of Bethlehem fiction - a Noble, possibly one of Spades to differentiate from the other Nobles featured so far, has been dragged to a “PTA Meeting”, due to her mother having one of her friends steal the transformation artifact she needed. As the Noble keeps trying to tell everybody that she needed to use her powers to fight evil, and the various adults keep trying to tell her that she’s being “Manipulated” by the “so-called” Queen into being a Child Soldier - an extra Wrong Genre Savvy assumption due to the Queen of Spades valuing individuals over any organization - the lights in the auditorium suddenly go out. A Mnemosyne (in life, an older boy that the Noble of Spades knew ) marches in, a small army of Darkspawn at his beck and call, eager to devour the now helpless Noble, and the foolish Mortals who’ve taken her powers away, thus saving him all the trouble... Only for the Noble’s human mother to pull a Jade-coated knife from her sleeve, and throw it in his heart, while the other adults use Jade-coated weapons, occult spells, or even firearms to wipe out the Darkspawn. As the Mnemosyne is paralyzed from the Jade knife, he feverishly rants and raves - half The Darkness part being outraged at mere “meatpuppets” defying the Void itself, half the human side screaming Incel-esque insults about the Noble and her mother - the Noble’s



mother finishes him off by taking a concealed carry pistol from her purse, and planting one through his head. The Darkness infesting the Mnemosyne's body itself leaks out through the floor, leaving only the teenager's corpse behind - something the parents would explain to police as a "self-defense shooting", which is easy enough to explain due to his history of violent juvenile convictions, and an attempted assault just before he was lost to The Darkness. When the Noble daughter asks her mother what was different between the two, especially since she knew The Darkness was out there, the mother confidently explains both of them: She's old enough to truly know the risks and consequences of fighting a war, and she was doing it out of her own choice to protect her family, not being a "puppet" of some unknown being...)

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(Suggestions to New Faction pictures - meant to fit the "Two persons per picture" theme of the core faction pictures, just with two Hunters of each new faction rather than one Hunter, and one Noble contrasting them)

- #Ammit (XXX)
- Character Risk Analysis (XXX)
- The Light Company (XXX)
- The Star of Bethlehem (XXX)
- Sanitation Workers' Cooperative (The background image is a large "waste management" truck, just with the initials S.W.C. being slapped where the logos go. In the foreground are the two example Hunters: the first is a haggard-looking Hispanic maid, with a pistol tucked in her hip, mopping up the blood leaking from a dead Spawn's body. The other is a man dressed up like a pest exterminator or sewer cleaner, gas mask obscuring his face, and an AK-style assault rifle hanging from a strap - think the GTA V "[Bugstars Exterminators Uniform](#)" Heist Disguise. The male SWC member is doing some ritual to "Cleanse" an object, most likely an altar of some kind, infected by the Darkness's taint; exact ritual type up to artist, but preferably something besides "Cross pointing exorcism", to show the SWC is different than the Long Night or Maleficarum.)
- The People's Guard (There are two people, standing in front of a brick wall with a spray-painted symbol; either the logo for the People's Guard, or a crowned skull with an "anti-" symbol sprayed over it to symbolize opposition to Nobility, and other supernatural "monarchs". One of them is a young man in a black hoodie, a ballcap, sunglasses, and a bandanna over his face, a backpack on one shoulder (unzipped to show several spraypaint cans), a spraypaint can in one hand and a cell phone in the other. Hanging from a chain on his jeans are several transformation phylacteries from various Nobles. The second of them is a young woman, with red-dyed hair, a handful of face piercings and earrings, and jet-black lipstick. She wears an "acronym" T-shirt - the acronym itself being AMAB, and the spelling being "All Monsters Are Bastards" - ripped winter camo pants, and black

combat boots. She's crouched in a combative stance, with a wooden stake in one hand, and a shining silver blade in the other)

- Magisters of the Economie (XXX)

## Appendix: Athens of America

*I love Philadelphia. I was shocked at what a great city this is. For me, it is the cat's pajamas. I love everything about it. I love where I live. I love the people. I have been met with such kindness and affection here.*

- George Dzundza

The other Hunter books have discussed at length about what many already know: Philadelphia is a messed-up city. The reality is that people don't look closely at Philadelphia, at the *people* of Philadelphia. It is a city of problems, like all cities. It's also a city of beauty, if people would care to find it.

## Age of Aquarius

As America watched a trio of men fly back from the moon, the world felt a shift. Suddenly, around the globe, hunters were reporting that there were new creatures being found. Young girls, wielding witchcraft, started to appear with increasing frequency. The conspiracies had reports of the rare encounter with such beings in the distant past, witches able to perform magic feats that they'd seen nowhere before. Such sightings were rare, though the archives of the Malleus and Aegis Kai Doru had stories of beings stealing life and dreams from towns and villages. Others reported cults of death-seeking madmen in the files of the Ascending Ones being willing to destroy entire desert trading posts wiped clean by flame and magic. The 1960s utterly changed the paradigm for the conspiracies, as dozens more sightings cropped up around the globe.

Philadelphia was hit by these new arrivals, though given the harsh realities of life in Philadelphia in the 1960s meant that the hunters didn't pay much attention at first. The fight against fairies and werewolves took precedence, and the mob war quickly overtook everyone's attention during the 90s when the princesses started to appear in numbers. It took until 2001, when the conspiracies in the United States took a new stock of everything that was going on under their supposed control, that the princesses were finally considered something different from witches.

Interestingly, Philadelphia hunters have had better knowledge of the Darkness than most other hunters around the globe (Barring San Francisco). The rough nature of Philadelphia has turned entire neighborhoods into breeding grounds for dark, disturbing creatures. Of course, these hunters knew little of the finer points of the darkness, it took years of futile effort before the Union struck on the key to clearing up these areas. Community renewal projects were the clue the hunters needed to

start clearing up these places, and in time the hunters managed to start making slow but steady progress on clearing up the Darkness.

When the princesses finally made their presence known to several cells in 1995, they were prepared to face some level of disbelief or even violence by the hunters. What they didn't expect was that the hunters would tell them to stop monster hunting and leave this to the adults. The hunters had organized efforts to handle the darkness, neighborhoods retaining hope when by all rights the princesses should have been facing down hordes of dark creatures and fallen humans. Unfortunately, the princesses soon found a more dangerous threat.

The Queen of Storms had been busy in Philadelphia, with many cells in the city realizing the power held in her grasp could make them more powerful against the monsters they warred against. When the princesses tried to show this to the other hunters in Philadelphia, things turned violent. The princesses weren't killed (mostly), but they were shunned. As nice as the princesses claimed to be, they were accusing other hunters of being monsters. It took the destruction of the Brotherhood of the Broken Bell to clue the hunters in that maybe the princesses were on to something.

Unfortunately, the fact is that hunters want to handle these problems themselves; allowing any supernatural being to take out another hunter was tantamount to betrayal no matter how far gone said hunter might be. The princesses claim they can bring them back without killing them, but the hunters have heard such claims before from a hundred different sources. To them, the only way to stop these corrupted hunters is to make sure of the accusations, then kill them.

The problem is figuring out who's corrupted, and who's just zealous in the course of the Vigil.

## Modern Nights

Now, as far as Philadelphia goes, the princesses are at a crossroads the hunters control with an iron fist. Even as the diplomats of the Queens try to make inroads as peacefully as possible, the hunters continually stonewall them. The fact is that the hunters consider the stormwracked their own problem, but the reality is that the stormwracked may be more deeply embedded into the hunter establishment than many would like to admit, or even imagine.

**Aegis Kai Doru - Scouring:** Two cells are seeking out princesses specifically to steal the strange relics they use. They're also trying to capture a princess, seeking more information about this "Alhambra" city that keeps coming up. The AKD had a cell in Alhambra for several decades, and the cell reported constantly that a group of princesses kept trying to claim it as, "The earthly home of the true queen." What do they see in Philadelphia?

**Ascending Ones - Guarded:** It's one thing when normal civilians try to end the drug trade. But when supernatural creatures try to end it, whether by burning the stock or campaigning for legalization? No, that would destroy the primary source the Ascending Ones use for their money in the Vigil. They've seen what the Abbey is doing, and they've decided to use the Abbey in Philadelphia as their

proxy, helping them stoke the tempers of hunters while quietly silencing possible peacemakers on both sides.

**Ashwood Abbey - Excited:** Secretly, the Abbey *longs* for a war to start with the princesses. Longing to let loose on a monster that actually looks *good* for a change, the Abbey are quietly doing their best to make the situation more complicated. Whether it involves quietly supplying stormwracked cults or getting between hunters and princesses over a possible common ground, the hope for the Abbey is that the other hunters will eventually tire of the princesses' 'empty promises'.

**Cheiron Group: Anxious:** Cheiron has heard the rumors of a war, but knows a war would only hurt business as the monsters go to ground while the bullets are flying. Still, the creatures of the Darkness *and* princesses are rare and valuable finds for Cheiron's cells. Cheiron is readying for a war that might happen, knowing that if it does they can capture a few transformed princesses in the early confusion to hopefully extract the implants they're looking for before they transform back into your average schmuck.

**Long Night: Conflicted:** Of any group in Philadelphia, the Long Night is seeking to try and find a common ground with princesses. Only the princesses they've spoken to have brought troubling news. It seems that they see several local churches involved in the Vigil as corrupted; churches that have claimed to have seen one of God's holy angels. If these churches are somehow corrupted, the Long Night will only be handicapping themselves by taking them out of the picture.

**Lucifuge: Diplomatic:** Where others have at best informal relationships with princesses, the Lucifuge are fully opening their arms. Princesses are actively trying to stamp out evil, and so the Lucifuge see them as a new ally in their mission. Unfortunately, the Abbey and an unknown party much bigger in the game are trying to sabotage a possible peace, even alliance. The Seventh Generation want to put an end to the cults, and so are working with the princesses in exchange for their aid in finding a rumored "lost relative" in West Philadelphia reportedly corrupting a high school.

**Malleus Maleficarum: Divided:** While the Longinians are seeking out vampires and the Ambrosians are seeking witches and wizards for their knowledge, the Sisterhood of St. Wisdom and Brotherhood of St. Athanasious are finally going for each other's throats. The Sisterhood believe that the Athanasians are letting their dogmatic views on the world blind them to the reality that the princesses are trying to help. The Athanasians counter with evidence the Sisterhood itself has gathered about princesses literally stealing hope, making golems with body parts, or even killing families for being "darkened". If fairies were the start of the rope fraying, princesses might be the sword to slice it apart.

**Network 0: Zealous:** The princesses are probably the only supernatural beings who aren't trying to kill NetZo cells. To the Secret Frequency, the princesses might be the first break in the mask of secrecy that covers the world. Unfortunately, the leaders of the princesses aren't quite ready, and have caused the corruption of several files that were about to hit the web. This has led a few cells to

draw up plans to accompany a princess on a live-stream, no more waiting for the editing to get things just right.

**Null Mysteryis: Hopeful:** A group of princesses have continually made contact with ORAS over the years, also believing that scientific inquiry is the key to understanding the world around them. ORAS' Philadelphia branch are reaching out in hopes to finally get some real empirical data on the princesses in the strictest confidence, but the swirling rumors of a coming war have the Misties rushing to keep a potential future from being destroyed.

**Task Force: VALKYRIE: Investigating:** Liberty Unit has gotten intelligence that the princesses are slow burns of a problem, so they're waiting for a while to strike a killing blow. For now they're gathering evidence. Princesses are tracked back to their mundane lives, files compiled on who they are, who they love, and even their favorite types of animal. The general profile is that princesses care, and TFFV knows that if you have to strike a monster in the heart, you'd better land home on the first blow.

**Union: Doubtful:** In the eyes of the Union, Philadelphia's problems are theirs to solve. So if these stormwracked cults are that big of a problem, they'll handle it their way, thank you. To the older members of the Union, the princesses are a bigger danger than the stormwracked. They see the princesses are children, literally. It's one thing for a family to introduce a son or daughter to the vigil over time, it's another for a kid to suddenly get powers and think they're a crusader for good. They won't start a war with the princesses, but they won't be rushing to help if it throws down either.

## Known Nests

**Osage Ave:** If spirits were the suspected start of the destruction of Osage Avenue, the area is now the largest nest in Philadelphia. Even after new row homes were built on the ruins, something dark still lurks within the very street itself. Families move in happy, hopeful, ready to begin a new day. They typically leave broken, practically destroyed by whatever they did to each other in those houses. 6221 itself is dangerous, with dark rumors that the current owner is a man bearing an uncanny resemblance to one of the members of MOVE that died in the bombing. Who or whatever he might be, Osage Ave is one location the city's hunters would rather leave alone.

**Fairmount Park:** After the Fairmount Reclamation/Slaughter, the lingering stain of what had happened that night between hunters and werewolves created a lair deep inside the park. Tended to by several "missing persons" turned lurkers, the nest is nestled in the trees flanking I-76. Why it has gone unnoticed for so long is a mystery, but with the "nobles" trying to make peace a possibility by alerting the hunters to such problems, the feeling is that maybe something has been colluding to make the nest as invisible as possible.

**Gosnell's Clinic:** What was on the surface an option for young women to control their lives instead became a literal house of horrors. Gosnell's actions in luring these young desperate women in only to practically mutilate them turned the former "clinic" into a terrible nest that seems to spawn lurkers whole. Hunters are trying to clear out the place, but the neighborhood is in the middle of the war between the Summer Court and several hunter cells.

**Heidnik's House:** The site of a sick serial killer who liked to torture his victims, Heidnik's House is the home to a nest that currently is actually being fought by a cell of the Long Night. Unfortunately for them, the house is a popular site for "murder tours", and the bile fascination the house has over such visitors has led the cell to fear that the site is actively trying to spread the dark sickness inside farther than just Philadelphia.

**Graham's House:** Less well known but just as dangerous is Graham's House, where a more prolific serial killer plied his trade. Few even in the local area know about Graham though, as black serial killers are relatively unheard of in the United States. The house is allegedly haunted by the ghosts of his victims, but there are also rumors of the nearby residents acting strangely whenever the anniversary of Graham's arrest nears.

**Lex Street:** In 2000, ten drug addicts were gunned down in one of the worst drug crimes the city had seen. Though not quite as "massive" as the other nests, the fact is that Lex Street flies under the radar, slowly growing in power as hunters ignore it and the princesses struggle to find a foothold.

## "Eleanor Little", Storms Goleanu

*"I know what you're doing, that's why I locked the doors too. Now, about your frontal lobe, doctor."*

The woman named Eleanor Little was once a grade school teacher living in Fishtown. She didn't know about Shadders making sacrifices to the Delaware, or of werewolves running around fighting drug pushers. She just went about her days preparing lesson plans and making calls to arrange field trips. That was when one of her students was kidnapped. She helped organize vigils, comforted her parents, stood with them during the press conferences begging for the child's safe return. They found the body three weeks later.

Little was broken, but more than that, she wanted vengeance. Some uncaring, unfeeling monster had turned the body of a child into their plaything, and had decided she wasn't worth the time to keep alive. Her dreams were filled with rage, of a roiling green-lit storm that covered all of Philadelphia, nearly all of Pennsylvania bordering the Delaware. The dreams didn't stop, until one night the Storm somehow spoke to her in a language she didn't understand. She didn't have to. She knew it was calling her to fight in its name.

Little became passionately involved in the Vigil, creating her own cell and leading them on nightly hunts to find the killer along with any other monsters that could be located. Despite their zealotry, casualties were high, and eventually Little was killed when a trio of vampires sucked her dry and burned her house down.

That wasn't the end of Eleanor Little.

Two days later, Eleanor Little was back at her school, a little scrambled but physically well. No one held anything against her, as she had been through enough and all were glad to have the kindly woman back. She was slower than before, sometimes even forgetting basic addition or the meaning of books like "The Giving Tree". She slipped up students' names and grades, but it isn't serious enough that anyone is suspicious. To the administration, she's just coming off a bad experience, losing a student then her house. Anyone would be a little scrambled after such an experience.

Then the sun sets, and Eleanor sets off for North Philly. Going into several small churches at night, she tells them of the goals they must accomplish for their lord to return, to cleanse the Earth for the time of Judgment. They're all convinced she's a prophet, calling on them to hold to the Vigil in the name of the Lord. Only her closest followers, the ones who have become Stormwracked themselves, know about the bodies she's stolen and the things she's done.

Eleanor Little is just another collection of souls, a wisp of smoke bound by hatred to Earth. In Philadelphia she sees great potential, a way to finally carry out the will of her queen in a city practically filled with the rage-fueled and unyielding. The Long Night in North Philly is her best recruiting ground, all they need is Biblical interpretation and they're hooked. The few that won't play her game are forced out; she's only had to kill two who oppose so far. Even as she fights the Darkness, she sees more potential in M 5:5. The gang members are driven by their most base rages and drives, and their leadership is either absent or at an opposite end of the problem to their views. Perfect for bringing into service of a queen who will always value their actions and sacrifices. All the while she goes into school every day, as bright and waking as if she never needed sleep, and teaches her classes on grammar and addition.

**Description:** The thing that wears Little's face is a worn middle-aged woman, somewhere around her fifties. She dresses conservatively, gray hair wrapped in a bun and always has a small, serene smile on her face. Even when fighting alongside her cultists, she never drops her small, calm smile.

**Storytelling Hints:** As the force driving the Stormite cults in Philadelphia, Little is a valuable target for any hunter looking to score points with the "good" princesses. Of course, Little's cult is also seen as a force for protection in North Philly. M 5:5 is her next acquisition, as she forces out anyone who questions her actions. Her cultists keep her in fresh body parts as well, since they accept that an "angel of God" can't possibly be contained in the same earthly form for long. Her subservient cells number close to five, and if she takes M 5:5 she'll have experienced combatants as well, something that no hunter wants to see happen.

## North Philadelphia

Hard hit by bad economic policies, an exploding crime rate, and the fact that they were essentially abandoned by the state government, North Philadelphia has endured. The people in the area have seen everything from riots to recession and come through all the stronger for it. Never let it be said of North Philadelphians that they're weak when you learn what they've gone through. The Long Night and Ascending Ones both use the hope of the people in these neighborhoods as a driving force. The Long Night for recruiting the willing to join their holy work, the Ascending Ones to find willing brothers and sisters to join their ceaseless vigil.

Of course, not everyone is so strong as to survive unscathed.

## Fischer Park Freaks

The Freaks are a new, relatively unknown gang rising in North Philadelphia. They're so unknown that no one knows who their members are. Gangs don't form overnight, they either coalesce from those who live in the area or branch off from other more established gangs. The Freaks just appeared one night, tags appearing without anyone being seen putting them up. The police have no arrests to make, no key figures to profile, and no drug dealing to trace. The gang almost seems to need no suppliers or contacts, no one in the Philly underworld knows anything about them.

The reality is that the Freaks *did* spring up overnight. A group of friends that thought they were a gang but just got into a few fights over more money for cheap crack were slowly turned over the course of several weeks from small-time hoods to something monstrous. The creatures that took their place on the surface look human, but come nightfall the truth is revealed. Their bodies bulk up to near-superhuman proportions, their hands fuse to old, rusted Tec-9 SMGs. Their only colors are black, as they trail small lines of cocaine behind them.

Princesses recognized the signs early on; the Freaks aren't a gang that any hunters could ever understand. They were born of a dethroned princess, one of their own who became a monster when she fell too far in the pursuit of what she thought was justice. Like all things involving the Darkness, the Freaks are both a symptom and cause of infection in the area. Unfortunately North Philly, especially Fischer Park, is under the control of the Long Night, and there's at least one Long Night cell angling to take down the freaks no matter the cost.



## Light of the Lamb Baptist Church

Light of the Lamb used to be a simple fire and brimstone church with a hunter cell among the congregation, no different from much of the Long Night. Then one night the pastor held a dream of a mighty angel of green fire coming to him. The dream changed him, and he realized that his small cell was doing little to stem the tide of monsters by simply fighting in the night and taking down small vampire pimps and werewolf packs. No, they needed to destroy the Darkness itself.

Suddenly Light of the Lamb became a force to be reckoned with in North Philadelphia. Vampire “cells” were burned nightly, and the werewolves realized that it was better to steer clear than risk a confrontation with a cell of zealots seeing angels. The Long Night was thrilled however, and though they never formally joined with the compact Light of the Lamb has continued to work with Long Night cells over the years.

Princesses looking out for Philadelphia knew better, recognizing that Light of the Lamb is in fact a cult of stormwracked. The pastor has slowly been bringing in more and more of the congregation, turning entire families into cultists and even managing to create two constructs of flesh and dead bodies. Arsons have become frighteningly common in the neighborhood, but the people seem to almost not care. What has happened is that crime has gone down, drug usage is vanishing, and the people are moving on with their lives. Only a few members of the congregation of Light of the Lamb remain in the dark about the truth, but the plan is to spread beyond Philadelphia once the time is right. Something that the princesses can’t allow.

## Story Hooks

Light of the Lamb has had enough, they’re going after the building they know is the Freaks HQ. No more raids, no more half-measures, it’s all or nothing tonight. The Freaks somehow got the news though, and a street battle has broken out. The police are already on the way, and you’ve been caught in the crossfire. Light of the Lamb doesn’t care for what they see as “apostates”, but you’ve already had a few problems with the PD already. Where’s the way out of this one?

The Freaks aren’t just kidnapping, they’re actually using the same tricks as the gangsters of yesteryear. They’ve started setting up illegal food pantries to win over the local families, and have reportedly organized a secret clothing drive. The witnesses said that the gang doesn’t want the police shutting down a good thing, and worse, most of the families are accepting it. Is there a way to stop the Freaks without undercutting what’s becoming a vital community resource? And if these guys are “Darkness” infected, what explains the sudden shift?

## South Philadelphia

It's a running joke that Philadelphia is the most infamous city in professional sports; every year the city population hopes that one of the teams will make a championship. Of course, everyone also knows that Philadelphia rarely ever actually wins a championship. Despite this, the strong community spirit of the neighborhoods of South Philadelphia has contributed to the ability of the locals to stand tall despite everything in the world seeming to come down on them.

## The Philly Mob War

A decade before the princesses revealed their return to Earth, Philadelphia's criminal underworld experienced a massive upheaval. For years, the local family of *La Cosa Nostra* had been relatively quiet. Angelo Bruno, "The Gentle Don", preferred the business-like approach to crime that involved quiet rackets with minimal violence to make money. This didn't sit well with his underlings however, and on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1980, the Gentle Don was murdered in front of his own home on 10<sup>th</sup> and Snyder. The murderer was brought to answer to the Commission, and suffice to say never made any trouble again.

Bruno's assassination paved the way for younger mobsters to try and take the city themselves, but they made themselves too big a target for the Feds to ignore. A short mob war was fought, and despite angling by others the New York families organized John Stanfa to take over Philadelphia. This didn't sit well with many of Philly's native mobsters, and these "Young Turks" began their own war to seize control of Philadelphia, especially the drug trade. For over a decade Philadelphia would experience a mob war right out of the worst Depression Era. Street hoods with chips on their shoulders squared off against the experienced men who made their bones for decades. The fighting dragged in other crime outfits, from outlaw bikers to black gangs who wanted a cut of what the Mafia could offer. Despite the lucrative hopes, the volatility of the family pushed many criminals away, and even into the arms of the up-and-coming Slavic mobsters streaming out from the Iron Curtain.

By all rights, the newly blossoming princesses would have become part of the mob war if not for the fact that the various hunter organizations were already making their plays. TFV made sure that the FBI had a close finger on the pulse of the problem, as the Malleus listened in on some dark and desperate confessions. The embryotic Union took to the streets, as the Ascending Ones cut off drugs to anyone getting too violent towards civilians (and out of their control). The new princesses, most of them teenagers, were still trying to figure out what, exactly, they were. The idea of facing down armed and dangerous groups in such an environment was a little too much even for such proactive individuals, especially when the stories started to spread about hunters calling *them* dangerous witches.

Realizing that they needed to safeguard their lives, the oldest and most experienced princesses in Philadelphia steered their younger charges away from the mob war, focusing them on anything else. Urban decay, street gangs, decaying schools, anything to keep them safe from the mob war, and the hunters who claimed it as their problem. Two princesses who decided to buck the warning were later reported missing by their families, and have never been found.

The aftermath is still felt through the city, as the Philly Mob is weakened and left adrift by the bad blood felt by other criminals thanks to the Young Turks actions. Despite being reasonably active for such a weakened family, the Philadelphia Mafia is seen by many to be on the decline, and some have posited that what was once their territory will be up for grabs by the Five Families of New York very soon.

## Story Hooks

An older princess who lived through the war sees the lack of attention on the Philly Mob as a chance to right the wrongs she never had a chance to. The police are spreading rumors that a woman is attacking gambling rackets, money laundering fronts, and threatening the lives of several soldiers of the mob. Unfortunately, the mob has also become semi-reliable for getting weapons and information for several hunter groups, to the point of being nearly indispensable. Either the princess stops, or someone needs to fill a sizable power vacuum.

## The Princess of the Diamond

Philadelphia is a sports town, even though the teams never quite make it as far as the fans want them to in a season. It isn't unusual for hunters to organize around their favorite teams, using game nights as an excuse to step out of the house or reasons to get together to plan their actions in crowded, noisy settings. Spiritualists report that the power of the fans coalesces into a force of hope, joy, sorrow, and anger.

Which is why no one was surprised a few years ago when reports started cropping up in the grapevine of someone going at the monsters with a bat. It's a simple tool, one easily available and untraceable, but the reports never changed. Always a woman, practically a young girl, going against monsters with a baseball bat. Then the stories got weirder; she was dressed in gaudy clothes, almost a parody of a baseball uniform. Her bat gave off light, and could throw balls of fire at her enemies. Contacts in the witch community knew nothing of any of their own doing any night vigilante work. The reality is that it's a princess. Theresa Fontaine Blossomed three years ago, realizing that she had a light inside her that needed to be used for good. A lifelong Phils fan, it was obvious how she wanted to style her new "persona", as she calls it. Grabbing up as much sports gear as she could, that night

“The Princess of the Diamond” took her fight to the streets. She stopped a mugging in progress in Packer Park after a home game one night, and took on the threats of South Philadelphia ever since.

Of course, South Philadelphia is Union turf, and already has “protectors” for the Sports Complex. The territorially-minded Union has bigger problems to worry about, but the Princess of the Diamond is an example of how the Union in Philly views princesses; as unnecessary troublemakers who are making more trouble than they solve. Several videos have already sprouted up of a “costumed superhero” that could be passed off as one of those assholes who thinks that a gimmick and costume makes a “superhero”, but now that magic is involved the Union is getting antsy. The battle over the Walnut Street Theater, the war with the werewolves over Fairmount Park, and the risk of conflict with fairies in West Philadelphia is pulling the Union in every direction, and they don’t need a kid with a bat and dreams of glory throwing things out of the delicate balance that’s been constructed.

**Description:** Theresa is a black-haired teenager presently enrolled in her diocese high school, popular enough to not be bullied and willing to stand up for those that are. She’s reasonably fit for her age, though her parents just chalk it up to gym class rather than living a double-life as a vigilante. When on the street she prefers clothes that are stylish, but not flashy. Ever since she realized what she is, practicality is her biggest concern.

(Description of Transformed clothing)

**Storytelling Hints:** For Theresa, the fact is that she’s a hero, a *princess*, and that *means* something to her. She’s even close to letting her closest friends in on the new life she’s living and making them sworn to the cause. Unfortunately she doesn’t understand that her powers don’t extend to making her friends as seemingly invincible as she is. Knocking a few muggers around and fighting the odd vampire isn’t the full measure of what the world has waiting for her, but Theresa is so high up on cloud nine that she thinks all it will take to fight the deeper dangers of the world will only take some training.

## Center City

As the neutral ground of Philadelphia, Center City is home to where the hunters and princesses try to come together to work out just how they can work together.

Arlan Tamm; City Councilman

*"I understand that you're looking to bring a new ballot measure for the next election. Let's talk about this privately so we can keep the press from skewing things wildly out of control against either of us."*

Arlan Tamm grew up in the district he now represents on the council. Going off to college back in 1969, Tamm returned to try and set up a better future for his city to keep his children out of the trouble he got into as a boy. Unfortunately his hopes for a better future collided with a particularly dangerous cult of the Darkness that saw children as the best way to foster the spread of their "god". Tamm didn't understand what it was they worshiped, but when he realized the truth he spearheaded the initiatives that killed one small problem from Philadelphia's streets. The amazing part to many hunters was that he did it without a shotgun or a coverup.

Since then Arlan has tried to be the man on the inside for Philly's hunters. He's met with the Union on the Walnut Street theater problem, tried to act as a voice of reason for the constant war over Fairmount Park. He's attended one Abbey social event at least to try and see who they were, though afterwards he can only politely but firmly decline. He'd tell the Abbey what he thinks of them, but then he'd lose a lot of charity money for a lot of good causes. Like Ben Franklin, Tamm knows that politics is, "The art of the possible".

When the princesses made their first appearances, Tamm was skeptical. "Too good to be true" was the phrase his cellmates had heard the most, until a princess of Diamonds came to him to discuss the problem of the Stormwracked flowing out of Philadelphia. When brought to observe just how pervasive the problem was, Tamm agreed that something needed to be done. He focused on trying to root out what let the darkness gain power. He tried to get as many abandoned homes torn down as possible, to keep the schools from sliding any further into budgetary neglect from the city and state. He continues to fight, and has earned the respect of the hunters who know what Tamm is really going up against. Younger or more arrogant hunters mock Arlan Tamm for sitting behind his desk and fighting with a pen. These hunters don't know about the night Tamm had to fight off a vampire in his office with nothing more than his chair and a coat hanger.

The Barrett Commission has approached Tamm, seeking him out to be their man in Philadelphia. Tamm has declined their offers as well, as he sees the Commission too nationally focused to understand the problems of his city, his people. Which is why Tamm has agreed to help the princesses.

It would be small at first, city beautification and infrastructure efforts. Having the sheriff's office work with the DA to make sure that the people being incarcerated deserved to be in jail and prison in the first place. That was when a cell of the Stormwracked he's been fighting made it their mission to try and stop *him* as well. Thankfully Tamm had done enough favors for the Philadelphia vigil that a cell from the top of the food chain was able to stop the cult from killing him.

Tamm is convinced that the princesses are onto something with these cults, but for each organization he has had to use a different spin. They're idolaters for the Long Night and Malleus, while for the

Union they're willing to destroy whole neighborhoods to drive out a problem that can be solved by rallying the community. Twists of words become proof to cell after cell, and while it's effective Tamm is slowly starting to worry that he's building a house of cards soaked in gasoline. Because how easy would it be for one of these cults to turn the narrative around, to suck in the cells by offering them the solution to burn it all down? Tamm is especially concerned about the cells of Network Zero in Philadelphia. The lack of concern the cults have for collateral damage combined with Network Zero's desire to put the truth to the masses makes a terrible thought to hold in the mind.

**Description:** Tamm is what most people imagine when the words "middle-aged politician" are said. He's losing his hair, and what's left is rapidly going gray to the point where he's started dyeing the rest the same to look statelier. Even with his age, he still makes it a point to maintain some level of fitness; even if he works in City Hall, he must go home at night, and he doesn't plan on making it easy for any monster coming after him. His eyes still gleam with the same spark that launched him into politics in the first place, and even years of dealing with the realities of government haven't stopped him from fighting for his causes.

**Storytelling Hints:** Tamm isn't going to let his usual hunter prejudices blind him to a threat, especially one that's spreading *from* Philadelphia rather than coming into it. The princesses are still relative unknowns to him, but he's learning fast that the hunters for the first time might have allies instead of more enemies. He meets weekly with the "ambassador" from something known as the court of Diamonds, though that's just about all he knows for now. Still, he's aided other hunters in getting information that has saved their lives, giving him just enough leeway to convince Joey Carcione that maybe the princesses aren't yet another problem for Philadelphia.

## The Mural Arts Project

The Mural Arts Project was created in 1986 by Mayor Wilson Goode, envisioned as an effort to combat the wave of urban graffiti that was everywhere in the city. Hiring both artists and former vandals, the program has become a force of good in the city. The murals created have become world-famous, including the mural, "History of Immigration", one of the largest in the world.

For hunters, the program is one of their best hopes for a bright future in the city. The murals draw communities and neighborhoods together as the projects take shape, and even the graffiti artists across the city have an unwritten rule that the murals must remain untouched. Anyone who does is an instant pariah. Princesses consider the project a powerful beacon in the region, one that was undoubtedly part of at least ten Blossomings in recent years. Both factions have found mutual understanding over the murals, and have agreed to protect them from any harm or defacement.

## Story Hook: Drawn Together

Your neighborhood has been chosen for a new mural project, and everyone anxiously waits for the new artwork to be finished. Only someone is trying to sabotage the project. The artists involved keep getting delayed in trying to finish the piece, supplies go missing, and progress on the mural itself keeps somehow getting reset every morning. Is it the Darkness? Is there a faction of hunters trying to undermine something the princesses hold dear? Is some other group trying to weaken the relationship between hunters and princesses even more? What is so vital about one single mural?

## Martha Olson, Diplomat of Diamonds

*"I believe we can find a common ground on this particular issue. You just need to trust me that I know what you're going through."*

Martha Olson is quite possibly the oldest princess in the Philadelphia area fighting for the Radiant Queens. Awakening during the mob war, Olson fought to keep her loved ones safe from the ravages of the Young Turks faction in the mob. This soon expanded out into protecting her neighborhood, which brought her into contact with several other princesses who had Blossomed when she did. Banding together, the group kept the Darkness from overtaking the city as the hunters fought the mob.

That was years ago now, and Martha realized that the city had a bigger problem. Recognizing the presence of stormwracked cults in the region early on, Olson has made bridging the gap between Philadelphia's hunters and princesses a top priority. The facts are that the hunters are at threat of being corrupted by Storms, turned into cultists to her wrath and made into her foot soldiers, they're insulated from new ideas by their intense suspicion, and their difficulty in coming to non-violent solutions.

It hasn't been without loss. Two of Martha's nakama

## Heather Ingram, Tears Spy

*"You have another option, one that doesn't involve bowing to corrupt churches or shadowy governments."*

Heather Ingram became a princess shortly after the mob war ended, though the effects of it still washed over her life. Even before her transformation she chose to always defend her little siblings

from the abuses of their father. Even driving him out with her newfound powers didn't make things easier, as their poverty from his leaving with his income and savings forced their mother to work even harder for her children. Ingram had to help raise her siblings during the day, and protect them from monsters at night. She was easy prey for Tears, and realizing there was a place they could always be safe she swore fealty almost the second she found out the option was available.

Her queen issued a new task; gain intelligence on the "capital" of the rebels. Each night Ingram sets out through the city, following hunters in their vigil to find out just what, exactly, they are. She's nearly been killed several times, and has justified the murders she's committed by reminding herself that she was defending herself during her duties to her queen.

So far, Ingram has found that the hunter culture is, above all else, *not* a unified force. Acting out of a desire to protect what they know and care about, she has managed to convince several cells in the city that service to Alhambra is the best way to save their loved ones and to spread the word about the true ruler of mankind waiting to take back the planet from the monsters. This has also earned her the attention of Philadelphia's hunter rumor mill, and at least three of the city's conspiracies are already on the lookout for her.

More worrying is the stormite presence in the city. Their presence is nearly overwhelming compared to other regions on Earth

## West Philadelphia

Aside from the current stirrings of war with the fairies, most of West Philadelphia is relatively calm compared to the rest of the city east of the Schuylkill. Unfortunately, this peace may not last very long.

## Dr. Douglas Palmer, Null Mysteriis Zoologist

*"Everyone forgets that the animal kingdom is just as vulnerable as the rest of us."*

Dr. Palmer has been working at the Philadelphia Zoo for ten years now, occasionally leaving to make an expedition or conference with his close friend, Dr. Malcolm Yee. Palmer didn't learn about the stranger things in the shadows until seven years ago, when the zoo was in danger of losing Tony, their Southern White Rhinoceros. Tony was supposedly sick, but none of the vets could figure out what the problem was. Determined to uncover the cause, Palmer camped out that night with Yee, hoping his friend could help him figure out just what was wrong with Tony. That was when the *thing* slithered over the walls of the enclosure.



Malcolm guided Palmer to ORAS, and from there Palmer has taken it upon himself to both guard the zoo from the predation of monsters trying to use the zoo's animals as resources and to study what he might come across. He found that for years, the zoo had been a veritable candy store for the unknown in Philadelphia. Gorilla blood, lion fur, lizard scales, resources for paranormal "recipes" capable of doing anything from imbuing a man with the sprinting speed of a cheetah to venom of a cottonmouth. The zoo had been lucky though, the animals were too precious to outright kill. Still, Palmer took up his protection of the zoo, and has been consulted by ORAS on several cryptozoological finds since Yee's disappearance.

Worrying incidents have Palmer on edge now. Someone has been trying to break into the zoo, he finds the evidence each morning when he has his daily talks with the morning staff. Scratch marks, locks jimmied, and gouges in the landscaping outside several exhibits. The animals are all healthy however, none are showing any odd or adverse symptoms that could indicate a paranormal incident in the making. Still, Palmer is worried, and has considered the possibility that someone is through with the zoo being under hunter control.

**Description:** Palmer is just over 40, but his work has kept him healthy enough; sometimes you need to wrestle the animal down when it gets riled for its own good. His hair is lightly salted, and a gleaming enthusiasm for the animals always keeps his eyes lit brightly.

**Storytelling Hints:** Palmer's role in the Vigil is one few hunters remember to care about. Of course, this worries him greatly, since he wonders just how long it's been since someone realized that creatures of the darkness were stalking his zoo and the animals under his charge. He doesn't know who or what is trying to get at the animals, but he's also curious as to what's stopping them. They're clearly able to enter the zoo, but why aren't the animals being harmed yet? Worse, if his zoo is being targeted, what the hell is going on across the river in the Camden Aquarium?